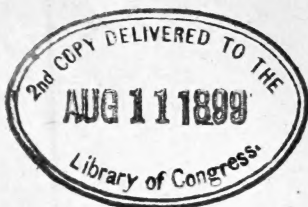


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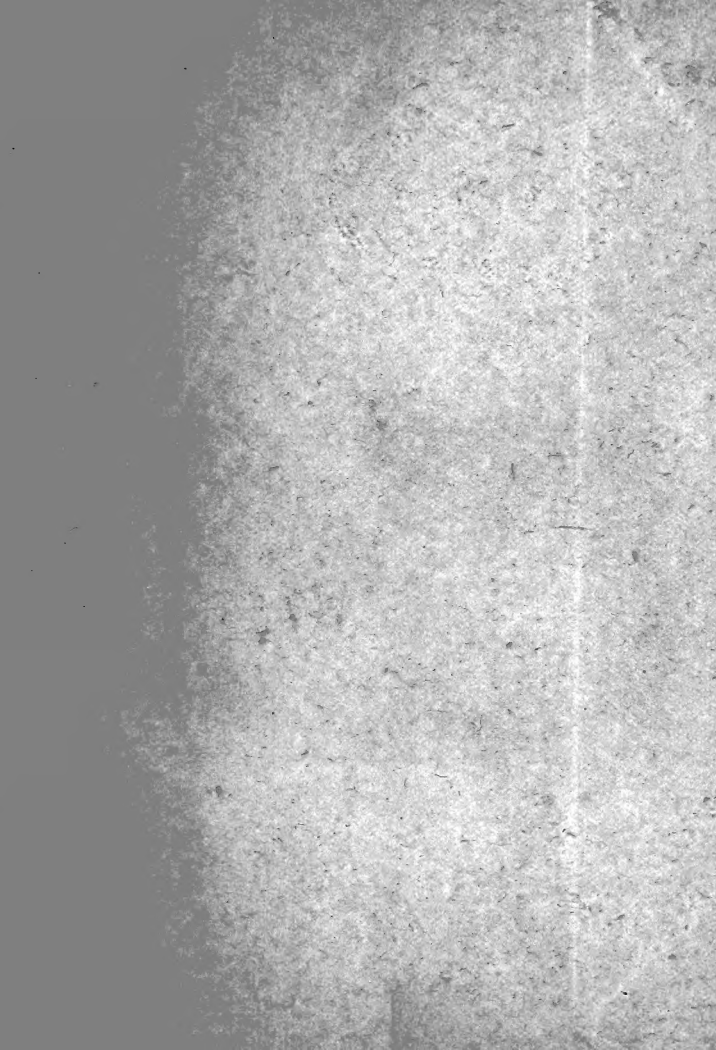
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BIRDS AND BOOKS.



Birds and Books

BY WALTER LECKY.

Author of "Billy Buttons," "Green Graves in Ireland,"
"Impressions and Opinions," "Short Stories," etc.

William A. Mc Dermot



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BIRDS AND BOOKS.



MY first sight of a bullfinch was in one of the most northern of Irish counties, wild and pic-

turesque Donegal. It was on an early June morning, one of those Irish mornings which ever after haunt the imagination. The soft, grey, Irish sky above, and in its folds the lark, spilling music, which seems, on such a morn, more like the voices of spirits communicating to earth a bit of celestial bliss than the earthly songs of birds; the yellow swaying oat's stalks,

and beyond them the burnished helmets of the furze, from whence came the clear note of the mavis carolling to his lady love. Add to this the piping of that gay serenader, the Irish blackbird, "with his beak of gold," and the soft, low crooning of a little Irish river at my feet, whose melody, methought, as some old tales sped through my brain, was but the luring song of a dripping mermaid fair, who might, did I venture near, do to me as she had done to Goethe's poor fisherman.

Among such scenes came my first bullfinch flitting among a little group of hawthorn trees, showing me his black cap and his dark brown breast; when lost to my view, in the shrubbery, still recalling his presence by a few notes in a swift flute-tone, that caught my boyish heart, and aroused the enthusiasm and unbounding ambition of youth to capture all its fancies within my breast. So I followed him

from shrub to shrub, from tree to tree, held by his beauty, following the law of human greed, even dominant in youth, until the gay fellow, weary of my attentions, went into the sunlight as if he was a part of it, held my eye for a moment, and, like all the things we cherish, faded from my view. With his going came the old spirit, so masterly portrayed in La Fontaine's fable of the *Fox and the Grapes*.

Distance lent him no enchantment; his absence and above all his noble unwillingness to be my prisoner made his beauty despised

“ Things, bad begun,
Make strong themselves by ill.”

My next meeting with the bullfinch was in a sleepy, old Tyrolese town, fond to my heart by its lack of modernity, and its absence of tourists, and it has other claims, memories of Hofer, whose life I once read in a little green volume, crying myself to

sleep over his tragic fate ; memories, too, but more broken and blurred, of the Minniesingers, one of whom, in Italian marble, crowns the square, and in his quaint armor, for poets in those far-off merry times were warriors as well, a thing befitting when actions followed so quickly words, lends a glamor to this Old World town.

In front of the statue is a little cobbler's shop ; the owner bears an Italian name, but his look and speech are German. A travelling friend, listening to his rich voice singing a lyrical snatch from Schiller's *William Tell*, the shepherd's song, saw in this evidence of his Italian descent, as if the Tyrolese were not as musical as the Italians. He went on the plan of those wearying scientists who, meeting with a fact and not knowing the causes, boldly invent them, and then stamp them for all time with their dogmatism. Our friend

the shoemaker, for such he afterward became, was proud of his speech and his country, a characteristic which at once engaged my respect. How could it be otherwise, just fresh from a study of Scott and his ringing lines in my ear. The cobbler had been in the army and had a rare fund of anecdotes, amongst them his hobby which he always mounted in front of an audience, and those of us who laugh at the show forget that we are only unhorsed for the time, ready at the first convenience to remount. And I do not hesitate to say that on this same mount the very best money's worth in life is to be got in the riding. The nag our friend rode, to me a most interesting creature, was "Bullfinch training," which he illustrated, illuminated, if I may say so, with his pet which hung above his head. And what a pet, coming to the cage door at his master's greeting, hopping on his finger at command and

whistling a pathetic little German *lied*, on his satisfying, curious perch, then returning to his cage with huge gravity, the reward for his effort a few grains of hempseed, given to him with a kindly heart.

And as the bird ate, what light shone in the cobbler's eyes, what words of sweetness and richness came to his mouth. How I envied him, while reading in his eyes that Bully was above price!

The third time I met Bully was under other skies and sad circumstances. I was walking down Vesey Street, New York, when the sound of a drunken sailor's voice awoke me from my reveries.

In his hand he held a cage which now and then he violently swung around his head, and in the cage was Bully, be-draggled, tailless, a perfect bit of bird misery. How different from the gay and saucy fellow that had first captivated me among the Irish meadows, how different

from the sleek, well-fed pet of the German cobbler! Around the drunken lout were grouped a crowd of children, all of the lower classes, dirty and frail-looking, upon whose poor features I discerned that human pity which has brought joy and sorrow to the earth, but which is after all one of God's noblest gifts.

How easy to read in their little pinched faces the anger which aroused their little hearts, and made them band together to rescue the ill-fated Bully, and I entered into their secrets, and, as diplomacy was better than force, Bully became my pet for a crisp new dollar-bill. So I bore him to the North with much objections from a colored porter who, following the godless cult of the syndicate he represented in so menial a manner, dubbed the miserable bird a nuisance, but here played again diplomacy a noble part, taking the form of a presentation of a coin of the

realm, and Bully once more was free to air his misery amongst the trappings of luxury. And so we reached home and Bully was transferred from the many-holed cigar box to a burnished cage, in full view of a large and merry aviary, in order that their liveliness and music might cheer his exile and banish his misery. And so it was, Bully began to cast off his gloom; he was no longer to be seen as a puff-ball on his perch, but a lightly skipping fellow full of pleasant ways.

His tail grew, his breast shone; he changed his ragged cap for one as showy and glossy as a beaver. He was now in dress parade and full dear to my heart, and these colors he could show to as much advantage in his yellow cage as his Irish namesake could among the hawthorn trees, while his performance was to my mind superior to the cobbler's pet. And here is how I verified this last assertion.

One evening as I sat reading the piquant essays of Hazlitt, I came to a bitter, cynical passage which made me put down the book to analyze its truth, and to look up from an old habit. The canary had just finished his song with much bravado! Buffon's chamber musician, from his long acquaintance with man, has learned from him to play to the gallery. Over my head was Bully's cage and from it came that martial air, *Die Wacht am Rhein*, perfectly piped. I arose and there was Bully, the piper, bowing to the right and bowing to the left, spreading his tail as dainty as my lady's fan. When his piping ceased, I gave him a few seeds from my fingertips, and from that day Bully has been my martial German piper.

As I write he sits on the top of a chair near my writing desk, and when "Senor," my large yellow-headed parrot will give him this invitation, "Sing, Bully, sing,"

there will be martial music in the room.

Early in my career as a book hunter, the most delightful of avocations, I was warned by a devotee of thirty years' experience to cultivate memory, tact and patience, the requisites for success in this gentle art.

"Memory," said the sage, "in order that you may not bring home, with laughter in your eyes, some closely hugged bargain, to find it on your book shelf, a bargain of long ago; tact that you may neither irritate the bookseller with useless questions, nor minister to his greed by the thirst in your eyes, which he reads as easily as a doctor tells a pulse; patience which enables you to seek for the book of your longings, in the dust of years, amid the curios of centuries, on stools, chairs, rickety step-ladders, or on any convenience that may put the shelves within closer range."

After I have practised these requirements assiduously, and for years, I cannot say that I would pass the sage's examination. Was it not a few days ago that I brought home in triumph, from a dust heap in Montreal, an odd volume of an English edition of *Browning*, to find, to my utter disgust and contempt for myself, that I had two volumes marked the VII.

This might argue that the one in priority possession of my shelf had been unread. Robinson Crusoe reasoned wisely from a footprint on the sand that something human had passed that way, and the blue pencil marking of striking passages, rising boldly amidst much jargon, was of the same class of proof. The book bore a human track, and, on the peculiarities of the markings, I were easily convicted. Notwithstanding my own lapses, I am ready to acclaim the wisdom of my old friend's three rules, especially patience,

and from practical experience to affirm the truth of the old proverb that "Everything comes to those that wait." And I have thrown my belief in this shape. If a man lives long enough, he gets even with his enemies and knows his friends, and that is the acme of patience. I have never sought a book save one, *Clough's Poems*, and it may be my bargain any day; my patience is far from exhausted, but it did fall into my hands when I least expected its coming. And the tale of such a book, long prized by me as the most notable effort in English of conscious purpose and diligent workmanship (I refer to Walter Pater's *Marius, the Epicurean*), is inextricably woven with the possession of my first chaffinch.

Pater's exquisite book had long been my quest. In my yearly visit to New York I had spent days and days in its hunt. "It is one of those books," said the bookseller,

“that rarely remains a day in our shop. We have a class of people that call daily for such books, and, of course, first come first served.” These booksellers never permitted me to leave their stores without inculcating the maxim of patience, as if they knew the irritable nature of most book-hunters when clipped of their quarry. Braced with his maxim I hastened down Eighth Avenue, an old haunt of mine, for there, amid smells indescribable, dirt white with age, children uncanny and unkempt, old clothes of all makes and countries, in all sizes and stages of wear, I have found the princes of the book world, and entered a nook where all these things were in riot, the shop (with a stretch of the imagination) of a Polish Jew, its owner sprung from a race that has suffered. I have a keen sense, the gift of heredity, for the suffering of others, and it takes but ordinary sense to track suffering in the pecking

eye and hollow face of a Polish Jew. With a greeting in German he at once recognized me as an old customer, and with the alacrity of his countrymen went at once to business.

“I have,” said he, with a roguish smile, laying his flat hand on my shoulder and putting his curved nose, that odd mark of his race, near my face, “a new barrel of books for your inspection.”

Everything he possessed was for the stranger's inspection, and then his sneer or his grunt, he knew me better, I thought, and his invitation and its matter was so framed as to show his kindness, aside from any business consideration, and I accepted it at its full meaning by diving into the barrel without further ceremony, bringing this and that dishonored volume from its contents. What a place for meditation on the vanity of talent, and the shortness of all immoderate fame! Here

was the poet, novelist, essayist lauded to the skies by his friends as one destined to live and comfort the succeeding ages, consigned to the oblivion of a barrel in the home of discarded things. My search was not in vain, for to my anxious hands came the very book I sought, Pater's volume. How it fell in with such company I forgot to ask in the joy of my find.

As I held the book in one hand, and fumbled for change with the other, the quick Jew divined in my greedy eyes its merit, and put upon it a price beyond my expectation. As I started to bargain with him, the privilege of every book-buyer, one of his countrymen entered with a little wooden cage in his hands, and carelessly set it on a pile of old carpets from whence came the thrice repeated cry of fink, fink, fink, followed in a few moments by a delicious song which made me forget the rapture of my prize

and center my greed on the little cage and its occupant, well known to me from its first call as a chaffinch, of whose song I had heard so much in the Austrian Tyrol.

Having heard the price of the book I asked that of the bird, while between the venders passed a rapid conversation in Yiddish, interesting from its facial gestures, and to my vexation found that the price of both were beyond my pocket. And I was handicapped in further bargaining, for I could not do as the boy with the apples beyond his reach, belittle them. The bird's song was in evidence of his worth, and the merit of the book was in my eyes. After unsteady reflection there finally came to me a hint from a book I had read, and the memory of the book was from the fancied resemblance of a figure therein to that of the birdseller, that a Jewish vender was the easiest fellow in

the world to strike a bargain with if you impress on him your importance and show contempt for his goods. The first part of the programme I could play, the second part, as has been seen, was no longer in my hands, and even the first part which had worked so well in the Orient, that it was given as a recipe in a book of travels, was of no avail in New York.

The Jew had learned the primary of democracy, the equality of men, and was practising how to handle it with dexterity against gentile scorn. I opened the book and, for a few minutes, lost myself in the music of Pater's prose, and again the bird, from the darkness of its little cage, tempting me to break its bondage and end so sad a captivity, shot through its wooden bars a strong, rich, tender strain, his most ardent plea to my sympathy.

How I berated myself for the forgetfulness of my purse, whose loss was only

felt when I needed it. How I longed for a passing friend. How vainly I pleaded with the bookseller to buy the bird and keep it until my return, thereby earning compound interest. Arguments being of no avail, after putting Pater in the depths of the barrel and covering him up as a dog does a bone, that he wishes to find on his return, and trusting to luck for the possession of the chaffinch, with the air and manner of a sulky child I sallied forth, and made but few steps from the store when I met an old friend to whom I regaled my woes and desires. When he had heard my story he laughed right heartily, and making me specify the exact place where Pater lay hid, left me still spreading all around him his infectious laughter, and soon returned with both bird and book, bought for half the sum of a former asking. To my tirade against the venders and their dishonest pranks,

he trilled out the full of his cheeks of sunny laughter, handed me my cravings, finding his money, he said, returned with interest, in my happiness, and then, with a Shakespeare phrase poised lightly on his tongue :

“How full of briars is this working-day world,”

joined the crowd, while I went home light of heart, and more firmly convinced of the worth of patience.

A few days later I bore my chaffinch to the North, the cold North, far away from his native haunts, the copses, orchards, gardens and hedge rows of Old England, yet no happier bird dwells in captivity.

A few months ago, in the summer weather, he left his cage, ran the gauntlet in a series of rooms, and finally escaped to the greenery of a huge maple where he sat and sung for hours. But no sooner did I open my study window than he flew

from his beautiful retreat, through the sunshine, to the gloom of my window sill, entered most willingly my study and sought his seed-dish with the air of one who was well satisfied with his actions, whose contentment was beyond dispute. As he sat pecking and preening, I, setting out to moralize on his conduct, was met by a phrase from the book that had accompanied him to the North :

“The many,” he said, always thus emphasizing the difference between the many and the few, “are like the people heavy with wine, led by children, knowing not whither they go;” and yet “much learning doth not make wise,” and again, “the ass after all would have its thistles rather than fine gold.”

My bird was of the “many;” would I have loved him more had he been of the “few?”

My first recollections of the goldfinch

center around my early home ; while other recollections are blurred and yearly blotting out, those of my childhood long hidden in some tiny brain cell creep into the open, stoled in sadness. All memories of vanished days are sorrow crowned. My father's house rises before me with the giant sycamores in front of it, a wooing and nesting place for birds ; inside, close pressed to the window, the shaky oblong table whereat he used to sit and read aloud of gay warriors and bold lovers. And his soul was in those books, shooting merrily through his gray, Irish eyes. How we followed his voice, laughing with keen boyish glee as the hero played with advantage his every caprice ! How the tears glistened on our cheeks, when the heroine was in the hands of the villain, and how our hearts beat as the gallant knight and hero with his trusty fellows came cantering up the road just in time to rescue the

fair one and put the villain to death! Among the books he used to read to us were Scott's, Dickens', Cooper's.

The great Thackeray was outside his domain; he loved a story that galloped along, laughed and cried. To sit down and reason with an author was beyond his might. He could weep over Little Nell, but a Becky Sharp he could not understand. And I have no regrets that I was coddled on the literature he loved, for I am bold enough to put forth, even at the risk of being called a heretic, the opinion that if all our juvenile literature was lost, it would matter little. And my ground for this opinion is that the old masters of English fiction and poetry constitute by far the best reading for boys and girls.

There is a manliness in their pages, a human pulse, a heart throb, that is inspiring to youth. Their characters have the life-like touch, become real to

youth, enter his very system and ever after continue a part of him. Noisy criticism may tell him that Dickens' characters are mere puppets, that can never be met with in human life; that Dickens was a vulgar and conceited coxcomb, that his politics and sociology are eccentric and foolish, his style turgid, the whole man and his work a bore, but what man can patiently listen to such charges who, as a boy, read *Pickwick*, fresh in his memory that group of "immortal grotesques" marshalled under Weller.

When I hear Cooper called a creator of wooden figures, the Cooper of my boyhood, I have an irresistible desire to take up the bucklers in memory of those delicious nights when my father read to us those marvellous tales of land and sea, adding so much to youth's delightful domain. My father's reading of one of those tales, and my first remembrance of

a goldfinch, are indelibly blended together.

Above the oblong table, almost touching my father's head, when he was seated for his evening's ramble in fancy land, hung the goldfinch's cage. The bird was, according to him, an exceptional one; my father was of that peculiar, Celtic type, who must idealize all they love. This bird was, if memory plays me no tricks, a *cheveral*, known to the eye of the initiated by a white spot, about the size of a pea, under the throat. This marking gave him power over song far beyond his ordinary confreres, made him a star, and the object of attention in the locality he frequented. Now this particular goldfinch happened to make its first appearance in my father's birthplace, where his sweet, wild notes and his jaunty bearing made him a prize for all the bird-fanciers, and, finally, taken on a bird-lime twig, after escaping lures for months, he crossed the ocean as a

tribute of friendship "from those at home, to the exile far away." And the love of the Irish exile for this link with his native land was most touching.

When the bird began to sing, and he sang by gaslight as well as by sunlight, the exile, though thirty years had fled since his boyhood home faded from his view, shut the book he was reading, and on fancy's golden wings flew to the scene of his youth, the haunts of his love, by the merry magic of a goldfinch's songs.

It was during one of these reveries that my impatience caused the death of the beloved pet; a night of dark sorrow to my childish heart, and my father's stern displeasure, and the tale is soon told.

My father was reading the *Deer-slayer*, with our feelings high keyed :

"As she moved by the tree that hid Chingachgook and his friend, the former felt for his tomahawk." Now we listened

for the scene which was already grouping the figures in our childish brain. Just then the goldfinch burst forth in song and, as he did so, my father stopped his reading to listen, while I, impetuous and burning with eagerness to hear if the book scene tallied with that which held my mind, could brook no such interruption, so rising on my tip toes, I struck the bird-cage violently, snapping the hook that held it to the wall.

Down it came, first on the table, then heavily on the floor. My last sight of the goldfinch, and that stolen over my shoulder, as I clambered heart-broken up the stairs to my dark room, peopled ahead by my fancy with all kinds of monsters, was lying in the soft palm of the exile's hand fluttering in death, gently stroked, lovingly caressed. That night with its strange sounds, its processions of fairies and ghosts, speaking cats, cantering

horses, and devil-eyed dogs, far from making me register vengeance and dislike against all birds, and the goldfinch in particular, begot a love that even to this day makes me hang around a bird shop with positive enthusiasm. And no lover of Nature may apologize for such an enthusiasm.

My next sight of a goldfinch was under the blue Italian sky lit up by a soft but brilliant sunlight. Goldie was flitting from thistle top to thistle top, as light and airy as its swaying down. When he settled for a moment, enticed by some rare tid-bit, how that soft sunlight fell upon his fine, crimson head, glistening the black which stoled it, and adding a softer shade to his little brown back. What antics he played, this pretty little gymnast, on the ready-made swings and burs of the thistle tree, and when he went away how my heart went after him; but away he

went, naught of care to burden his golden wings.

Was such a flight in Pushkin's mind when he wrote :

“Men are wearied, men are grieved,
But birdie flies into distant lands,
Into warm climes, beyond the blue seas ;
Flies away until the spring.”

Was it then I vowed to possess a goldfinch, to shut him up in a wooden cage like Stearne's captive starling, where he could not get out, to rob him of his thistle-down and sunlight and do these things with an air of satisfaction under the guise of my love for birds, a trick much alike to those done by men to their fellow men under the guise of that ample mantle, humanity? But be it here written these reflections are penned in the presence of Goldie. It is a fitting case for Shakespeare's saying,

“After execution, judgment hath
Repented o'er his doom.”

After teaching Goldie to be a slave by giving him the greatest of luxuries, the love of ease with dignity (he has now a golden cage), I open his cage door and the windows wide, and when he refuses to be free, I compliment him on his intelligence. And this is all so human!

As I shut the window, I call this slavery love, and having had him to perch on my finger for his price, he proudly surveys the room, the envy of all the birds, and turning his little head in their direction addressing them in a quick, soft voice, tells them what a great bird he is, and how he possesses his master's confidence, and doubtless many other things, for I know but imperfectly his speech.

Goldie and I have been mimicking man and playing at history.

It was while travelling in company with a young doctor in one of the most romantic parts of the Scottish Highlands,

that I heard for the first time the flute-like song of the linnet. The little musician peeped from out the golden furze, his red head watching our approach, but too indolent, on that fine summer day, to fly off. Or was it that he divined we were lovers of nature, from whom he had a right to expect whole-souled comradeship? Be this as it may, he became bolder from our advance, spread his wings as if to prepare for flight, laughed at our idle suspicions, hopped about the furze with a satisfying air of safety, and finally mounted his pulpit, the highest and most gorgeous limb of the tree, and piped a lay worthy of the attention of the old god, Pan. We had found a seat in the shape of a huge boulder, a side of which was worn low by nature, and making no inconvenient benches, I had better say chairs, for the formation was more of that aspect, and comfortably seated there in full view of

the musician, out of the sun's blinding rays, snuffing the scent of the mountain flowers, ravishing our eyes on their lordly beauty, we listened to our Scottish piper while he exercised his heavenly gift. In the intervals of his song my friend quoted snatches from the poets without comment, showing their appreciation of this masterful singer. And he was worthy of their thought. As their fine sayings fell from my companion's mouth, I thought how often had Burns, whose heart was in the Highlands, witnessed such a scene, and who among the poets more worthy of a lintie's song than he who wrote :

“Or, if man's superior might
Dare invade your native right,
On the lofty ether borne,
Man with all his powers you scorn ;
Swiftly seek, on clanging wings,
Other lakes and other springs ;
And the foe you cannot brave,
Scorn at least to be his slave.”

This was the bird who had piped his way through Scottish song, making his name treasured in each Scottish home—the bird that had rallied the drooping spirit of Ferguson and cheered the lonely watch of the Etrick shepherd, Scotland's royal bird. He is a part of the landscape; wherever you travel, he is there, bird of the chieftain and cotter, in

“Russet lawns and fallows gray,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray;
Mountains on whose barren breast
The laboring clouds do often rest,
Meadows trim with daisies pied,
Shallow brooks and rivers wide.”

All over Scotia's fair land is heard the lintie's song. Much as I loved his song, and were it in my power to make him my captive I could not have done so, I could not have robbed the landscape of his presence, robbed the furze of that which was its crown. So we sat, two wanderers from a far off land, from the land that the

Scottish poet thought of when his fortunes were low, until our piper was joined by his "guid wife," and then, as was our duty, we left the loving pair to their domestic felicity, and turned our steps toward the town. Since that lovely summer's day I have met the lintie caged in many a clime, in the poor man's cabin, in the rich man's home, pouring out, irrespective of class, his unpremeditated lay, but it ever lacked that wild freedom, that untrammelled trill which won my heart in the Scottish Highlands.

Despite Lovelace's pretty verses, iron bars have a subduing effect on both man and bird. My first linnet, (the pretty fellow seems to know that I am writing about him, for he lazily mounts the pine limb that I have placed in my study at his disposal to silence the petulance of a goldfinch who is darting through the room with a swift chirrup,) was given to me by

a Scotchman, and the giver of this and many other favors lies close to my heart. Of him, here is a tale told me by an animal importer as we leaned against a monkey's cage. "When Sandy landed with his wife and two children on our shore he had but little money, yet on the very day of his landing, and out of his small store, he purchased from me a lark. 'Just,' as he said, 'to make a bit of music in the house when Maggie and the bairns were lonesome for home.' I found out that Sandy had no employment, and was not likely to have any for some time, and noting the man's love for birds, I at once engaged him to peddle them, and from that little beginning, Sandy, with thrift and honesty, worked his way to his own shop, his heart's delight, where he can discourse by the hour to the gentle lovers of birds on his pleasant and profitable hobby."

I have been a customer of Sandy's for years. When in New York, I spent not a little of my time there, for his shop is after my liking, an arena where you can throw your ideas, providing you have the courage to get after them and be a knight in their defence, for the place is full of Sir Knights ready to pounce upon them, that, were you not there to offer protection, they would be daggered to death, and I take it as a compliment, that the thrifty owner of such a shop should ship and send to me as a Christmas gift "the best linnet he ever handled," with a long card of philosophical observations, proving thereby his right to his nation. Later there came a letter telling me that he had long wished to make me a "present," but as I "had heretofore no home he had to wait for the day I had," and he shrewdly remarked, as if to temper his truth for my palate, that "if you have not a house of

your own, you have no use for pets." The value of another man's thought is enhanced if it has had practical illustrations in your own life, and Sandy's little tempering had, as I will now disclose.

Some years ago I lived in a house as a subordinate. I had, near the garret, two little rooms, one I used as a bedroom, the other, as a study, where, on a mere pittance of a salary, I had collected a few precious books by a weekly hunt in the old bookshops. On one of these hunts I met an Irish sailor peddling a few bedraggled parrots in a grimy cage. It was easy to fall into conversation with him, as he played his tongue with all the vanity of a child. He had no time for thought with this outlet ever open. Start the conversation where you would, it came with a rush to the thing that most concerned him just then, the selling of his Pollys, which he forced on me with bantering persis-

tence. When I told him, to use an Irish phrase, of the "awkwardness of my predicament," and the wrath that might await the introduction into a peaceable house of a screeching Polly, he at once agreed with me, and abandoned his argument in the bird's defence, but it was only to spring another more plausible and much more taking.

He was not only a smuggler of parrots, but of smaller birds, and had nearby a choice collection of over a dozen that he would, driven by poverty, sell for almost nothing, so handing me his parrots, a proceeding which caught my sympathy, he started on a trot, and soon returned with his birds, canaries, goldfinches and Indigos, and the price he spoke hurried my hand to my pocket. The delight with which I carried them home was akin to that which I felt when I saw my name in print for the first time, emotions beyond

analysis. They were mine, I thought, a treasure that I had not in my wildest dreams of bird possession dreamt of, fallen into my hands by sheer luck.

I carried them home much in the manner of a child carrying his first toy, oblivious of all but them.

When I reached the house, instead of at once going to my own abode, I was so overcome with pride that I carried my pets from room to room, noisy on their merits, yet grieved as I read contempt in the eyes of those where I had sought but welcome.

I learned later that all this was very human, so I hung up my birds in the sunshine, and for months relished their songs, songs that made my little quarters beloved. Some one, however, is always found to destroy our likings, men of little minds and stony hearts. My superior, on a cold Christmas morn, when his heart

should have overflowed with charity, commissioned a silly servant to open wide the cage doors and then the windows, and my pets that gave no annoyance, whose songs were my solace, in seeking their liberty found death.

I have often tried to banish from my brain this cruel man's face, whose little sovereignty has long passed away, but memory holds him as in a vise, and puts him on her stage at the most unlooked-for moments. She brackets him with the songs of birds and the villains of books. She can fit him to her whole range of distaste. But you, my linnet, may have no fear, sing on thy pine spray, make me dream of other lands. No cruel hands will give you, little exile, the liberty which is death. After years of wandering, your master has a little home where Sandy's gracious gift may dwell in sunshine and peace.

I had been but a few days in the Adirondacks, just long enough to assort my room and to fashion with my own hands a sign of vast proportions telling to my neighbors that I was a physician, both by day and by night at their service, when a little incident happened that ministered to my pleasure all the years I spent in the wilderness. I had brought to the mountains a broken down constitution, a few articles of my profession, a scanty pocket book, and a few books, mostly French. Now my love for this language was purely utilitarian. I was located in a French Canadian settlement, and I thought that it would be pleasant for them, and no bad thing for me, if I could address them in their native speech. For one's native tongue has always a charm even from the mouth of an indifferent performer. The books were then to be a kind of target practise, by which I was ultimately to

bore my way to the heart of the community. I had a faded, well-thumbed and much worn copy of *Moliere* that had done duty in many climes since I first picked it from M. Grabousky's dust heap, *Paul et Virginie*, decorated with a series of blue pencillings, done in the days of sentiment and love's young untethered imaginings, and *De Maistre's Voyage Around My Room*, a little book which I had not then read, but which was brought along for its title, an adhesion to the old fallacy so often speared by the moralists of buying a book from its covers. It is a saying, "Read a book before you judge it," but I am one of those who seeing a title imagine the contents, and following this oddity, here is the way I reasoned. I am a young physician going to the Adirondacks for a double purpose, to seek health while helping others to find that boon. I shall be confined to my

room through my own indisposition, through waiting to heal the indisposition of others, through mountain storms and through that delightful feeling so strongly taught by the Chinese philosopher, Lao Tse, whose name in philosophy I know not, but which arises from a disinclination to move, and to whose attacks I was especially prone in my younger days, so said I to my sister as she packed my trunk, "Put *De Maistre's* in. You know there is no society where I am going, and that a great part of my time must needs be spent in my room, and this book may teach me how to spend it usefully. Perhaps I may send you a *voyage* some day."

My sister, who was well aware of my fondness for the teaching of the *dolce far niente* of the Chinese philosopher, laughed heartily at this bit of imagination.

Now it is hinted in this book that there

are in the world many curious persons, perhaps among them some of my readers, who fain would know if the book was of service to me, and to them I frankly answer no. It was charming reading, but the Frenchman's atmosphere and mine were different; besides in the mountains I had learned a better philosophy than any I hitherto knew, a philosophy which sent me to nature and kept me in the bracing air, rambling amid valley and highland, in sunshine and in storm.

The reading of this book was the cause of the incident which will be found somewhere in this paper. Adjoining my room was a large meadow dotted with hillocks that stretched to the river's brim. Many of these hillocks were surmounted by lordly maples, trees whose magnificent foliage filled the eye with beauty, and the ear with song.

For here came early the robin, choicest

of nature's warblers, with a heart of love and a mouth of music to woo a teasing mate and build a nest in the cool greenery of the leaves. Oh, bird of my Northland, what memories your song must ever awake within me, memories that cling to a vanished past!

One of those hillocks, famed for a huge maple, was a favorite resting place of mine, and my attachment arose from a robin's song. From the bare and topmost twig of the great tree this masterly singer, whose clear voice and compass of song I have never heard equalled, greeted the first speck of the morning sun and bade farewell to the dying day. Before my coming he had established his power to the distance of his voice, for when he sang, as if in reverence to his genius, his brother musicians were mute. To the trunk of his maple I had built a rustic arm chair, and further up a tiny little

platform whereon I could put his favorite food, thereby seeking to win his friendship and give him more leisure for song. And the fine fellow seemed to divine my intention the moment my project was executed, for rising from the maple spray with an exquisite burst of song, in graceful curves, he pirouetted toward the platform and helped himself to a quivering worm that in efforts to escape attracted his keen eye. The rustic chair built, and the platform erected, my musician ever at my behest, and the most delightful scenery all around me, there could be no cause for complaint in those early days of my Adirondack life. If patients were slow in detecting my worth as a physician, it was the ordinary way and nothing to be alarmed about.

Old practitioners had warned me of the length of years and patience it took to build up a practice, and that in medicine,

genius and youth were no match for talent and age. In our profession, and a few others, we hear much about experience, as if it were a thing of years instead of opportunity. And of opportunity, Buchanan, a Scotch poet, gave this sage advice which few of us heed :

“Grasp Opportunity, that, passing by
On the sheet lightning with a moment’s flash
Haunts us forever with its meteor eye !”

My way of grasping opportunity in those days was in sitting in my rustic bench, in the maple’s shade, reading, and my first book done there was *De Maistre’s*, and hear how it is inwoven with a robin’s memory.

I had sought the shade of my maple from the garish blaze of the noonday sun. All around me was at rest, as if nature was taking a little *siesta* to give her strength for the toil of a summer’s day. I slipped into my seat and glanced into my little

book as a preparation for my afternoon nod. I read, "Nature, indifferent to the fate of individuals, dons her brilliant spring robes, and decks herself in all her beauty, near the cemetery where he rests." I read no further for the thought took possession of my mind, and started my imagination on the gallop, until I found escape from its shadows in sleep. And from this delightful sleep, the sleep of careless, happy youth and untroubled brain, I was summarily aroused by a gunshot, and the noise was so strange, and so out of relation with my sylvan retreat that my awakening was an indescribable jar of those feelings of ill-omen that seem to foreshadow pain.

In front of me stood a grinning urchin, ragged and unkempt, with a century of cruelty peeping from his eyes, and puckering his face, and in his hand he held triumphant my bleeding, fluttering mu-

sician, the happy fellow of an hour ago. A mist came over my eyes and grief awoke anger in my heart, which the urchin quickly translated into flight, throwing, in his fear and with a cruelty that was inborn, my warbler to the ground, where he lay staining the soft grass with his blood. "Poor little bird!" said I, as I picked him up and stemmed the gaping wound, "man's inhumanity is not alone confined to his fellows; it has made his presence a menace in the whole domain of animal nature. Those who are his slaves obey him in fear rather than in love."

Having in thuswise moralized to free my mind, I carried my unwilling captive to the house, amputated his shattered leg, laid him in a padded box, and became his dutiful nurse. At first my exertions on his behalf seemed to be but useless annoyance, but patience, that gift so indispensable to the lover of nature, not only

conquered all repugnance to my attentions, but begot a comradeship on his part which continued until his tragic death. He was my first patient, and it is with some degree of pride I write that my treatment was successful. Dick was soon able to leave his box and limp around my room.

In the following spring, he repaid my love, for of trouble I had none, by filling my little home with his varied melody. Perched on the bed-post his song became the most reasonable and musical of alarm clocks. Once I carried him to the maple tree, the scene of his triumphs, in hopes that he might once again seek his seat, but the tree held ghosts, and no coaxing could make my little cripple enter its greenery, no song would he sing again amid its branches. I had not the heart to repeat the experiment.

So Dick and I became dearer to each other with the years, and he might still

have been with me in my new home holding first place in his tribe had it not been that in the goodness of my heart I admitted, on a stormy winter's night, a neighbor's half-famished cat to my dwelling, whose piteous appeals for mercy smote my heart. On the morrow no robin came to my call, no songster's notes made my dwelling merry. The ungrateful beast had eaten my bird—yes, "Nature is indifferent to individuals." The French writer's phrase was applicable enough to weave in any memory of Dick. Since those days I have reared from the nest many robbins, robins taken from young marauders, and there have been among them not a few fine songsters, but somehow their notes lacked that which made Dick's so deliciously satisfying. A friend who prides himself on his philosophical attachments declares, with all the arrogance of his class, that the robin which

hangs now in my study piping as blithely this fine December morn, as if it were a spring day, and the buds breaking into laughter all around him, sings as well as my lost favorite, that the difference is not in the song, but in my mind, and that this is owing to a lack of memory and a surplus of imagination.

“You are an idealist,” quoth he, “always putting tinsel on the past.” And might I not well accuse him and his tribe of doing a similar work? For what is philosophy at most but the continual dressing of a few ancient ideas to the fancies of the age! For when I go to Browne for his new panacea, lo! I find in his preface a salaam to the memory of some old Greek or Latin master.

It was at a place called Convent Station, situated on the banks of the Mississippi, at a point where the view of that stream is truly superb, that I first became

acquainted with the nonpareil, as handsome and companionable a mate as the bird tribe can give to man.

Convent Station, the name, as I suppose, from a convent within easy distance, is a little stopping place in Louisiana that could by no stretch of the imagination be dignified as a town. Here I came one afternoon of a beautiful August day, my wandering spirit seeking rest, for in those days I dreamed, as Ponce, that rest flowed from some hidden fountain, and having to wait for a stage to carry me further inland, I passed my time with a Northern telegraph operator, whose home was both cosy and novel. He was a handy man and a cheerful one, and these qualities are of great value to a bachelor as was my friend. He was a great lover of nature, and, as he told me, instead of boarding with some family of the vicinity, and suffering their peculiarities, he had asked for

and obtained an old and unused freight car, which, under his touch, had become the pretty quarters that his courtesy placed at my disposal. One part of his dwelling was occupied by a large cage, his own handicraft, containing a couple of dozen nonpareils, and a prettier bird-sight I have not witnessed. The cage was so placed that the sunshine filled it with golden light and lit up the motley colors of the gay throng that flitted in its joys. And that the reader may the better grasp this little Southern picture, let me draw a nonpareil as he sits now, with gracious mien, on the edge of my waste-basket this cold, winter night, begging a fly that has been bottled for his winter comfort, and for which he gives grace in a soft, plaintive, little warble, fitted to the landscape of his sunny South land, but hardly to my bleak, cold North land.

His head is violet-hued, his neck of the

same soft, showy color, the upper part of his back of a green yellow, the lower part of a bright red. The under part of his body, throat and chest are of a red also, but a shade darker than that of the lower part of his body. He is always in motion, which is dictated by a beauty and grace admirably fitted to give adequate expression to his coloring.

And now that you may have the picture before you of two dozen little charmers flitting and warbling in the sunlight, and that of my own delight on the edge of my waste basket, let me tell you how this Northern exile amused himself in the long tedious years of his stay. One of his amusements was the keeping of birds and their taming to a degree that I have never since seen excelled, and all the means he had to work with, as he laughingly declared, "was with that old instrument, kindness," on which saying I reminded

him he could use none better. Such success he had that I verily believe had he turned his magnificent collection loose that they would have sought him and captivity, so well had he gained their confidence. And to do this, I confess, is no easy thing, despite the fine spun tales in bird books so tempting to youth for a like conquest, so bitterly remembered in our failures. My acquaintance was a great lover of Thoreau, a man, strange to say, whose status is still in dispute with fireside critics.

Not so, however, with those who live with nature, love her, and listen to her tales. To them he is one of nature's searching masters, whose vision penetrates her secrets, whose love unlocks her most hidden alcoves, whose speech is her tongue. Of all Thoreau's books, and he had most of them, he loved *Walden*, which he had in a little sacred niche above

his hammock and within easy reach of his hand. I can shut my eyes and see in the dark, to this day, that niche and the two little blue-bound volumes of *Walden*, and in the dark comes back to me his voice, reading what he pressed me to admit as the best part of the book, *The Ponds*. Was it from knowledge or the sake of argument that I hesitated to throw him a bit of comfort? Such then were his amusements, birds and books, and none could give, at so little cost, so much enjoyment. It was the memory of this man and his pretty charmers that aroused my desires, as soon as I possessed a home of my own, to own a nonpareil, and hang him in the sunlight to witness his antics and color showing. And here is how my friend, to whom you have been introduced, came into my keeping. I was walking one night on Eighth Avenue, New York, when in front of a large shoe

store stood a bird-seller with a few birds, the most miserable set I have seen in any market. They were curled up, their heads burrowed in the feathers of their back, their tails partly erect. The bird-seller seemed to be thoroughly ashamed of their wretched condition. Noting my interest in the little captives, and heartily glad to get rid of them at any price, he commenced to bargain with the born instinct of his kind. A peddler is born, not made. I had not spoken with him, nor was it needful for me to do so, while his cunning gray eyes were riveted on mine, gleaning thereby all the information he needed. "They are lovely birds, choice singers," said the pedler; "just now they look a little ragged, but all they want, to be as good as any of their kind, is seed, water and warmth. Birds are like men," continued the moralizing pedler, "if they don't have the things they need, how can you

expect them to be, to look and act right? Feed me well and rig me up like a gentleman, and I warrant that I will do honor to my expenses. Put these birds in fine cages, for you can do it," said he with a sneer on his face, "feed them well and, on my honor, in a few months you can tell your friends that you bought them from Donald Burns." The scamp seemed pleased with his speech, but I had no mind to compliment him on its effect. With the aid of a few wretched birds he was pleading his own miserable self and the grudge of his tribe against those better equipped for the battle of life. Democracy taught him he was the equal of all men, his life told him that the jade was a romancer, who was continually holding as facts what history had proved to be turbulent imaginings, and to which verdict his own life in its experiences of them must accord.

His price, thrown out of his mouth at random, driven by poverty, was so modest, a mere song, as we say, that I entered into no dicker with him, for my heart would have repressed such a shabby dealing, but gave him, with a willingness that must have been evident, more than his demand. He accepted it without thanks; he had become in the hard fight of life cold and indifferent, society had developed the beast and crushed the man. "With his birds," said a friend, "there can be no luck, for with them came no kind words." So much does the human heart pant for kindness, that when things come under any other cover we doubt the worth of the gift. But why tax him for his manner, drove into him by his brothers? The teachers of inhumanity are men.

To the poor birds my kindness came, with a single exception, too late. The nonpareil alone survived, and in the moult

discarded his old coat and sluggish ways. I gave him a new cage with a swing, and a window facing the sun. There he forgot his past misery, and taken with the beauty of his surroundings, he added to it with his plumage and frolic on the swing. I opened his cage one fine summer's day, and after much thought he decided to come and test his wings around my room. Seeing that he returned to his cage in good season, I took the door off and left him to his whims.

As soon as I entered my study in the morning he would invariably leave his cage and come in my way, but not close enough to commence a comradeship with him, and the summer passed in this way. During the day his chief amusement was catching flies, and I have often been captivated by his dexterity and grace in what, from experience, I call a difficult art. Summer gone and his sport ended, he

came closer to my desk and finally lit on the edge of my waste-basket, and to my utter astonishment broke into melody. For his song, and to tempt him to easier intimacy, I put on my desk a large spider and continued my writing. His quick eye caught his favorite dish, and without any ado he hopped on my desk, went at once to business by striking the spider a well-directed blow on the head which paralyzed the animal completely. This done he gave a hop in triumph, and a low cry of victory, and seizing the spider ate him in a well-bred manner. From that moment our companionship has been inseparable. He bids me good morning in a quiet sort of way when I enter my room, and I, in a boisterous sort of way, (for I have never expelled the boy out of me), bid him good night.

When I seek a book in the library, he follows me from case to case, flits to my

shoulder, jumps on my head, and acts in a manner thoroughly in keeping with my tastes. He objects to visitors entering my study, and I have learned, after losing, to whomsoever took them, over twenty volumes, that there is method in my nonpareil's fine frenzy. It was a saying of my old friend, Colonel Johnston, that every man should have some nook in the house sacred to himself, and mine shall be my study with its birds, books, flowers and pictures, and no more my little bird shall your frenzy arise from the entrance of the idle and curious. Two is company, three a bore to man, bird and beast.

I was reading a few days ago, a criticism of *Leigh Hunt*, an old favorite of mine, and the reading, rousing my stagnant memory, brought once more into light, long lost memories. But a word with the critic, for it is not manly to hear your friend's reputation assailed and be

dumb. The critic assures us, with evident satisfaction, that my fanciful poet and my kindly-seeing essayist, whose healthful thought wears such an admirable garb, has had his day, that readers no longer owe him a spare moment.

What cocksureness does this age not show in criticism! Leigh Hunt dead, not a great writer to be sure, Mr. Critic, but as charming and sane a fellow as ever took hold of a pen, or carried in his pocket a note book. His eyes, it is also true, were not on the skies, they were on earth, and what writer has used them with better effect, or drew more beauty out of common things?

Leigh Hunt is dead, the sunniest-visionsed man in English literature, the happy-hearted loungeur among English meadows, music-laden hedgerows, babbling brooks, lazy villages, enchanted castles and jolly inns. Be it so, then, I mourn

not for the poet but the age that can feel no love for his legacy. Why should I blame the age at a critic's nod, and the huge book of literature lying before me, telling how viciously they lie, and especially when they judge those who have followed the same literary pursuits, which they, in divers ways, maintain that they adorn. Is not Pliny's suave dictum when writing to his friend Priscus, that Martial's poems "will not survive their author," my warning! But the poet who wrote them, in expectation of their doing so, gave to mankind and not to a clique the guardianship of his fame.

No single man carries the world on his shoulders. And of mankind I have too good an opinion to admit that it will willingly let die aught that can cheer the individual, and with it I leave my favorite, my spirit at peace, for a memory that came with his honored name.

In Louisville there was, a few years ago, an old bookstore of wondrous mien. It was merely a long passage, not more than six feet at its greatest width. Its height, I have heard frequenters aver, was twenty feet, if not more; on this matter I am no authority. It was filled with books, from floor to ceiling, leaving scarce a passage for the purchaser, whose fear was ever of a huge heap tumbling on his head, so recklessly were they piled. I know of no bookstore in the whole range of my experience, where a buyer was more at his ease. The owner gave him no suggestions but left him to his own sweet will, whether or not that will led him to pull from its place one book or a thousand. As he said to me once, on my apologizing for the fall of a corner of books, produced by my desire to own a large copy of *Massinger*, which copy was the corner's prop, "Don't mind a little thing like that, go on and

make your selection ; my books are to be seen and to be handled, a toss and a tumble now and then will do them good. Every fall shows a new face." I at once discerned the truth of the bookman's thought, for there stood a long, hidden row of old English classics, that would have brought warmth to the heart of Charles Lamb. The only time in my life that I wished for money was on such occasions. In rummaging the fallen pile I came across a coatless, nameless fellow, torn and scratched, burnt in a few places, altogether as disreputable a specimen of the book world as the eye could see. I had, however, to read but a few pages to discern the value of this ragged chieftain, and once again to be reminded it is heart and not clothes that make the man. As the bookseller handed me my carelessly done up purchase he said, with a quip in his eye, "If you are going out of the city put

that book in your pocket," referring to the raggy fellow in my hand, "you will find that he has something to say. Yes, *Leigh Hunt* is worth pocket room on any journey." Now my journey led me to a college wherein two of the most miserable years of my life were spent in parrot phrasing Latin and in learning, that has been a disadvantage instead of a use to me. The only good I lay to the place was the little start it gave me in German. Once a week I had a leave of absence for a couple of hours, and, while other students spent this time in various exercises, I sought the woods with *Leigh Hunt* in my breast, and under the guise of going for a walk betook myself to a little brook where birds came for a drink and repaid the debt with a song.

It was while lying beneath the shade of a bunchy, white-flowering shrub, whose perfume made one drowsy, watching the

sun-effects on the great, round, white and orange pond lilies, that languidly nodded to the passing stream, that a little blue bird shot through the bloom of the shrubbery, past the white and gold of the lilies and rested across the brook in a clump of dogwood blossoms, shading his brightness in their blend of dark green and pure white. He had aroused my mind in the same manner as some new plaything arouses that of a child to center all its thoughts for a time on the object of its liking. I could not cross the stream, so I awaited his leisure, and to do so the more easily I pulled the book from my breast and commenced reading where I had, on a former visit, left off. "Few people, rich or poor," the essayist was saying, "make the most of what they possess. In their anxiety to increase the amount of the means for the future enjoyment, they are too apt to lose sight of the capability

of them for present. Above all they overlook the thousand helps to enjoyment which lie around about them, free to everybody and obtainable by the very willingness to be pleased, assisted by that fancy and imagination which Nature has bestowed more or less upon all human beings." I was about to begin a new sentence when from over my head came a soft, dripping song, as if the perfume had taken to speech. I became motionless and peered amid leaf and flower for the singer. Soon my well-trained eye found his perch on the highest spray of the shrub. It was my violet blue bird that, startled by my coming, had returned to his favorite retreat. Putting the book in my breast I noiselessly crept into the open grass where my view was complete and my watch unnoticed. And what a pleasant hour I passed with this superb gymnast, who performed on the tiniest

twig the most daring feats, and those to that strange melody that had at first told of his presence ! He was in full plumage, and that as tight fitting as that of a Java sparrow. He seemed to be thoroughly aware of his beauty from the care and attention he lavished on it. When a feather became ruffled or stood out from its fellows, he immediately ceased his exercise, flew to a stronger twig and sat there pecking and preening until his coat was once more in order, then flitted back again and resumed his exquisite manœuvres, balancing his every motion to the sun's ray, contrasting his sparkling violet-blue with the dark green of the leaf and the white of the flower. As the bell recalled me to a wearisome study, loath to go I arose, and my going made the bird recross the brook, this time accompanied by his drab-colored mate. Then was made clear to me the melancholy of his song, the brilliant pres-

entation of his beauty and the masterly exhibition of his grace. I was witness to a bit of bird courtship, in truth to the last act of love prior to marriage, and a more winsome scene could hardly be enacted. The lesson, as usual, that day was a bore. The professor, as was his wont, mumbled away in mediæval Latin a stream of dreary words, but I paid no attention to him or his discourse, my mind was with much more pleasant and profitable things. *Leigh Hunt* and the bird had started my fancy to offer delights that no dull, plodding pedagogue, a race that I heartily hate, could take from me.

A Southern friend to whom I told this tale, as we drifted, one long, summer's afternoon, adown that part of the lordly St. Lawrence which is adjacent to my home, on his return to his native Alabama sent me a pair of Indigos with a little card dangling to their cage, telling me that the

tale was worth his gift, and begging me to come some day to the land of my early wanderings and see the habitat of the Indigo, and a longing to do so ever since possesses my heart. I put my Indigos in the aviary but they became listless and sorrow stricken; they were pining for home. Seeing this I removed them to a commodious, brass cage and hung them in the sunshine, within easy reach of my writing desk where, when tired with reading or writing, I had but to turn on my chair to have a chat with them. Once noticing the delight with which the male bird caught the flies that came within his bailiwick, I turned fly catcher and supplied him in abundance with his luxury. He became friendly, ate with evident joy from my fingers and finally persuaded his shy companion to drop her veil and do likewise.

We became such friends that I removed

the door from their cage and conferred on them the freedom of the room, and after three years' exercise of this privilege I have not a single fault to find. The Bishop, the name I have given to the male bird, when I enter my study these winter nights and light my lamp, draw down the curtain and settle into an easy chair with an interesting book in my hands, salutes me with a song, and it has often happened that while listening to his melody I have forgotten the book for the pleasures of memory drifted into the vanished past, where the dead live and the living are unknown.

Near my house lies a charming home, one that in the fine, soft summer days of the North, attracts the eye of every passing stranger, and as it is on a road much frequented by the gay throng of idle tourists, there is hardly an hour of the day when some one does not stand outside the

wicker gate to express admiration for the graceful trees, the well shaven lawns, and the fancifully made flower plots. The songs of birds, mostly the robin, who is a well-cared-for pensioner, and that little coxcomb, the yellow bird, are constant, while the hum of Italian bees seem to link the music of birds with the scent of flowers. The owner of this nook is a merry, much travelled bachelor, who has an opinion on most subjects, and a way of expressing it that makes his talk charming, if not always convincing. He has the faculty of listening, as well as that of talking, and no man, provided he has anything to say, deems silence necessary in his house. He hates cant, considers it a privilege to use his own intellect, and that, being evenly balanced, the outcome is rather strange. I admit, that he is to his neighbors "a little bit queer;" you see he will not run with the herd and utter their cry, and in this

light the misunderstanding is natural. Needless to say, he is a lover of children, dogs, birds, books and flowers, and it was through these things that I came to his heart, as warm a heart as ever beat in a human breast. Children on first sight fell in love with the big, brawny, laughing, blue-eyed man, who was always ready to turn his muscular arms into a swing at their pleasure, whose loveliest flowers were to be pinned by his hands on their white frocks. Stray dogs and wandering cats, as if by instinct, sought his house and found there food and shelter. It is rarely he has not some case of misfortune on hand. He has, too, his contempts, for who could be a man without them, and one of the most pronounced is against the vulgar worship of money, which is in the summer time so much in evidence amongst us. America, judged by a summer resort, would furnish a pitiable verdict. He is a great lover of

books, only the best, for, as he said lying one day on the green sward, under an apple-tree, with old *Andrew Marvell* open in his hands, "There's enough of the best to make a love feast for life." He has, in this love, an oddity, which I am far from admiring: his books must be costly bound, the outside tempting to the eye, a foretaste of the hidden pages. But he has wealth and the means to satisfy his fad.

What a sorry sight would my coatless, raggy fellows make in their rough cases, with his long rows of titled dandies in their polished oak cabinets. Yet, I ventured to tell him once that my pleasure while sitting in my little den overlooking the St. Lawrence, surrounded by the masters in scant attire, was as great, if not more so, than his in the finely furnished library full of all things that delight the eyes. His books cost him but little trouble, the writing to his bookseller;

mine came from a poorly filled pocket, often the price of a meal, or by pennies saved from ordinary comforts with miserly care. His books were his friends, mine were more. Every volume was bound up with the memory of the hardships suffered to make it of my family. And the strong roots of love but grow in the soil of suffering.

It was in his library that I first learned of the subject of this paper. I said he was a lover of birds, but he held against all comers, and oftentimes, much to my chagrin, that the only place for a bird was the open air, and he was fond of quoting against me one of my own authorities, *Leigh Hunt*, and this his saying: "Of all creatures, restraint and death become its winged vivacity the least." I challenged him to come to my study early in the morning, and to put forth his quotation in the presence of my choir of pets.

He, as his defence, asked me to spend a morning in his orchard, listening to a cat-bird, that had built in a clump of locust trees, and which was then in the full flower of song. I accepted at once his proffered invitation, and early one morning we sallied forth to a little privacy from which he had often watched the warbler. We were hardly seated when a bird about the size of a robin, but of much more compact form, of a slate color, alighted a few yards from us, and greedily ate some mocking-bird food which my friend had thrown in his way. During his meal his tail became almost perpendicular while his cunning, little eyes kept our every movement under his observation. The great Dane, Cæsar, that had accompanied us, and now lay asleep at our feet, dreaming, gave a jerk to his huge body, and a snappy groan, possibly the effect of a bad dream, when away flew the cat-bird,

and from the locusts sent us in rapid succession a series of angry mews. "Is that your warbler?" said I, taking an unfair advantage. "If so, your quotation deserves to be forgotten. My least songster would not disgrace the aviary with such a vulgar exhibition. You have a strange idea of bird melody if that bird is your favorite. Come to my study and hear the masters."

"With birds as with books, a taste is necessary." My friend paid no attention to my banter, but quietly took from his jacket pocket a beautifully bound edition of *Sydney Lanier*, and commenced reading. Reading aloud was to him an exquisite pleasure, and he cultivated it without reserve, until he had become an artist, whose work was an inspiration. His selection was *The Marshes of the Glynn*.

I shall never forget the haunting music of those opening lines :

“Glooms of the live oaks, beautifully braided and
woven

With intricate shades of the vines that myriad
cloven

Clamber the forks of the multiform boughs.

Emerald twilights—

Virginal sky lights.

Wrought of the leaves to allure to the whisper of
vows.

When lovers pace timidly down through the dim
colonnades

Of the dim, sweet woods, of the dear dark woods,
Of the heavenly woods and glades,

That run to the radiant marginal sand-beach with-
in,

The wide sea marshes of Glynn.

Here is the speech of tender passion.
None but a lover of nature could sing thus,
one, too, with an eye for her most hidden
beauties. It was filled with music, love
and beauty, my first introduction to a poet
who can know not death and who shall be
treasured when our idols are in dust. As
soon as the poem was read, the book was
returned to his jacket and with a smile he

turned toward me, saying, "The next number on the programme is a cat bird song, and we shall not have long to wait; see, he is giving the last touch to his coat before he appears in public. There he goes, hear him?"

The cat-bird had left his retreat and with it the sulk that had begot that angry mew, and mounted a mountain-ash, whose berries wore the faintest tinge of red.

Then, as if to revenge my cruel words, he poured out the most wonderful and elusive melody. He seemed to have stolen the songs of every warbler in his vicinity, giving to them a new magic in the resetting.

Once, I thought it was the soft, melancholy notes of the golden robin, but in a moment I was relieved of my suspicion—and seemed to detect the notes of the gray linnet, and so on until I was forced to own that he was a master—

and my little canons of no gauge to measure his magic. Nor can I forget the ease with which this wonderful melody came. I was unable to detect a single movement; some of the finest passages, I noticed, were played after a little twitter of applause that came from the thickest growth of the locusts, where sat, with her little head poised in attention, his brooding and well pleased spouse. What cannot love evoke? The haunt of this bird became a place of daily pilgrimage.

I brought food, scattered it around my seat, and when they came in quest, paid no attention to their inquisitiveness, which became remarkably daring. As soon as the young were hatched, discovering that I was the purveyor of their food, they became most friendly and hopped around my bench without the slightest fear. Now and then the male bird would spare a few minutes from his fatherly cares to sing,

but his disinclination became more and more, until his brood raised, and summer dead, his voice was dumb. His was no common minstrelsy to be played on any stage. It required a summer theatre and nature's richest settings, and I did not blame him for the care of his heaven-born gift.

Great artists do not step forth at every call. My last view of him was in company with his wife and children feeding on the ripened berries of the mountain-ash.

His delicious music did not, once I was beyond his power, convince me of my friend's opinion, that the only place for a live bird was the open air. There are degrees of enjoyment, and talent is commendable. Even if my canaries, goldfinch, bobolink, etc., must bow to his genius, their music is constant and always refreshing. He is the luxury of a summer day, my pets the lights of the year.

While watching the cat bird in my friend's orchard, my attention was aroused by a few pair of American goldfinches commonly called the yellow bird which were mating and building in the apple-trees. They were a continual source of surprises, and when in view, kept me constantly on the alert, witnessing their marvellous grace and agility. .

I find in my note book this entry, written in the fields under the date of July 10th, '98: "Yellow bird, yellow bird, what a charming little fellow he is! How gracefully he swings from the stem of the golden crowned dandelion. He seems ever in motion, and in a motion that is ever pleasing to the eye. I have seen him flitting to-day through the apple-trees loaded with flowers, a burning star flashing through a white and green sky. His song has not much compass; it cannot in justice be compared to that of the

canary, but it has qualities which are lacking in our more favored musician. Since I first heard the yellow bird on the bent top of a thistle bough, I have associated his manner with his song. It is full of go and royal cheer, as bubbling as a spring brook.

There is no straining after effect in it, or copying of the delights of better warblers, but his own whole-hearted, buoyant utterance, that floats as carelessly from his throat as thistle-down from its pods. It is as bracing as the sunshine among which he flits.

The yellow bird is a late comer to the North. This year he came the second of May, and on the following morning was heard in song in my garden and along the public road. In the course of a fourteen-mile drive, I counted no less than thirty-two songsters, heedless of their surroundings; some were among the lavish buds of the maples, others on telegraph poles, while

not a few preferred fence-rails. They were all changing their dress, some of them had slight patches of yellow on the back, but all in all they were not remarkable for beauty, nor for song. Their singing consisted of a few jerky notes, pitched in a high key. It seemed to me as if they were trying their instruments, tuning up, as it were, for the summer concert."

There was only one book I could read with satisfaction in those hours I devoted, lying in the long, cool July grass, to the yellow bird. It was that always companionable *Fly Leaves*, a fit book for any idle fellow. When the bird was lost to my view, I could roll on the grass, bask in the sun, open Calverly's book, and laugh at the turn of his phrase. To what a finish had he not carried the art of *Praed*. How irresistible his humor, how delicate his fancy, and how wonderful his gift of expression! I once heard an American

novelist declare that he could see nothing in this book to give it a vogue. Then was clear to me, the dullness of his own books; he lacked humor, and a novelist without this gift, can draw but mummies. Humor sees the peculiarities in the individual and in the subtle catching of these lies the greatness and strength of the novelist. *Fly Leaves* has a daily glance; it is within my reach showing on its pages, grass stains, juice of berries, lead-pencillings telling of its ministry in my rambles, and that to my many moods. And to those who love to ramble in the fields, orchards, or by country roads on a sultry summer day, when the spirit craves for the light and pleasant, for the laughter tipped, let him heed no dull novelist, but put C. S. C. in his pocket. I was astonished one morning to notice in my lettuce patch, a little flock of yellow birds. They were noisy, quarrel-

some and fighting for favors. With my glass I recognized that in the company, and the cause of the quarrel, were four or five females, flirting with shocking audacity. As I wished to experiment with this bird in my aviary, I placed an old goldfinch in a trap-cage and directed my boy to set the trap as close to the flock as possible without provoking them to flight. Easy-going and careless as he was in manual labor, he was in this an expert which I used to think came from his large dose of Indian blood, to which due credit was given in the mouth and cheek-bones.

No one could have had more pride in the fulfilment of my design. Scarcely had the cage been in position than the goldfinch commenced his calling, answered by the whole flock which were now around the cage. One of the ladies seeing the thistle seed and wondering no

doubt how it could be there so early in the season, and being tormented by curiosity, that privilege of her sex, went to investigate. Click, the trap was sprung. Greed and conquest flashed in the boy's eyes and found speech-setting in a wild yell, that leaped from his throat, giving dance music to his feet. I curbed his fervor, and bade him to remain quiet, as one door was still unsprung, and waited for a chivalrous knight to rescue the captive maiden.

Nor had we long to wait, for a particular, quarrelsome fellow on hearing her call of distress darted to her aid, finding himself not only captive but separated from the lady by a hidden wire screen. He made a brave battle for freedom, clung desperately to the wires while thrusting his head through them, but vain his efforts, it was might, man's most potent weapon, conquering right. My boy was in a flurry

of excitement (his age was twelve). All his body waved in motion to the little captive's struggles, while his eyes flashed impatiently for a sign. No sooner was the sign given than he ran to the cage, and in his eagerness of possession, allowed, much to my joy, the knight to escape. Shall I ever forget his face, a perfect photograph of his mind! Across it sped revenge, sorrow, triumph; one poor captive yet remained. "I shall have that fellow soon!" said the boy as he brought me in his closed hand the fluttering, tightly held little lady. As a fact the boy's boast was never made good, though we tried all manner of stratagem to take him, save birdlime, a cruel manner much to my dislike. He laughed at our every device, begetting so heavily the boy's scorn that I had to issue an order against stones, night raids, and other unfair advantages for his protection. And I must

admit that my boy had grounds for his discontent. The yellow bird would sit for hours on the trap door, preening his feathers, singing a cheery song, and driving all other birds from the trap, to which proceedings my impetuous Leon objected. The boy said it was spite, and I have seen so much of that in birds that I am in no position to deny the boy's judgment. I secretly admired the bird's saucy behavior, but as Leon was my expert in all things that pertained to bird nesting, bird capture, I did not dare to enlarge his disgust.

I befriended him, however, in many ways; I put within his reach material for nest building which he used with an artistry that won my heart. I scattered thistle and canary seed in his way and by these means gave him leisure to bid defiance to my alert boy, and when he left us I could not help thinking that I had lost many an

occasion for laughter, and many an exquisite study of boy and bird.

We put our captive in a dark cage, gave her no annoyance and in a week found her content enough to be used as a call-bird.

“When maidens sue,
Men give like gods,”

—and the giving in this instance was themselves. Males in peerless attire, lemon-colored back, black cap and black and white wings came at her sharp command and entered captivity for her nod. In less than a week I had ten of the most beautiful birds in my aviary, where they quarreled and fought with persistent delight, setting all order in riot until I was compelled, in deference to my well behaved birds to banish them from the aviary. This I did, retaining a few choice songsters, to whom I granted the freedom of my study, and which are now, as I

write, living peacefully with a Java sparrow and a bobolink. It is winter now, but when Spring's riot stirs their blood and beautifies their feathers, I, taught from experience, will open their cage doors and let them ramble around my room. One of them that often perches on my pen has added to his repertoire not a few foreign pieces, mostly those of an English goldfinch, but somehow I like him best when he plays his own piece, for it gives me in these winter days, so many delightful pictures of wanderings, marked by the songs of his tribe. I have often wondered that this bird, so fascinating to imaginative minds, should have no poet to sing him to fame. Lowell has tuned his lyre to the blue-bird, Bryant to the bobolink, and Whittier to Polly from the Spanish Main, but no poesy halos the head of the bird most worthy to its crown. Would I were a poet to sing his praise, but poets are

born to their birthright, and it is a birthright that cannot be stolen or usurped, so I content myself with hopes, that the day is not far distant when his name shall be added to the anathology of song, and in the wish of John Gilpin, "May I be there to see!"

In weeding out my library the other day, I came across a volume of prose and verse that had, on former hunts, eluded my search by contriving to fall behind a set of *Grotes' History of Greece*.

The little volume might have remained there indefinitely, had not my boy, in the hot pursuit of a mouse, pulled the books from their places. This mouse was his black beast, that scorned his authority and laughed at his traps. It lived princely, eating the birds' seed, entering the cages with engaging audacity and frightening the canaries, as the boy said, "out of their wits." I could see no cause for

complaint in the conduct of Mr. Mouse; I could not blame him for getting his living and that the best within his reach, which happened to be my bird seed.

Nor could I bear him ill for refusing at a boy's invitation to walk into a trap, and sacrifice his life to satisfy a passion for conquest and revenge. On this occasion, however, the boy vindicated the truth of a saying that was constantly in his mouth, "The fox runs long but he's caught at last." The mouse had run his last race.

Mr. Grottes' stately volumes could give him no protection, as they were roughly thrown to the floor, one by one, the mouse retreating, until its last stand was in a corner, behind the book of verse and prose, which soon followed to the floor those which had been its shield, and the unprotected, panting mouse in a last effort for liberty lost his life by a strong blow from the boy's fist, a blow that gave

him joy and talk for the rest of the day. In replacing Mr. Grotes, I found this book and put it aside until the weeding day came, a day of some sorrow to me, as I have a dislike to part with books, but of much rejoicing to the village children in whose little library my weedings are welcomed as fine gifts.

It all depends on the point of view, and that changes with the years and our mental growth.

Books that were the passion of my youth are no longer so; they seem now so dull and commonplace, and as I lean back in my chair, at the sight of these books, and ask myself how is it possible that I once could go without my supper and feign a headache to read them? I forget, for the time, that they are just the same and that it is my attitude that has changed; that in the days when I read them they fitted thoroughly my condition and administered to

my delights, while at the same time, strange to say, cultivating their own distaste that should later show itself in my haste to worship at new shrines. The book of prose and verse has no literary merit. It is one of those books written by an enthusiast who vindicates his mistaken right to the literary field by publishing a book at his own expense, and holding ever afterwards a poor opinion of the mental capacity of his fellow-men. I but mention it here, because it brought, in one of its poems, an incident to my mind, long forgotten, by prompting my own memory to fill out and breathe into the half-caught picture of the author, a soul. His poem tells of a red bird that he once saw under conditions similar to my seeing; verily do I believe that it was the same bird, but as his poetry torments rather than delights, poetry's true mission, I prefer my own vision and imperfect prose,

which is no fraud practised on the reader, as my prose can in no wise fall lower than the bard's poetry.

In one of the Southern States in a rural nook, a place of quiet and rest, there is a little country cemetery surmounted by a plain wooden cross that marks the last resting place of a devout and gracious man, whose whole life was at the behest of others, whose endurance and charity are still spoken of in a low, tender voice, still telling of the heart gapes left by his going. The cemetery is skirted by magnolias, whose rich scent blends with that of the roses, phlox and petunias, which, in the summer time creep over the graves, mixing their bloom in one gorgeous bouquet. It was my pleasure one evening when nature was in her merriest mood and dressed in her most befitting gown, to turn aside from the dusty highway, and seek rest in this most beautiful and most

unfrequented of grave-yards. Seating myself in a rustic chair that had been built under the shade of a magnolia, planted by the one whose grave it now shades, and lulled to revery by the fragrant flowers, the dying hum of the little village and the vesper songs of the mocking-birds whose favorite haunt was this acre of the dead, I spent most of the evening in a land of sweet and melancholy dreams with Shelley's lines as the peg on which all my pictures were hung:

“All things that we love and cherish,
Like ourselves, must fade and perish:
Such is our rude mortal lot,
Love itself would, did they not.”

Out of the revery and from these pictures my mind was drawn by a hitherto unrecognized bird-note which seemed to me to be the spirit of gentle melancholy that hovers around such consecrated places in the summer days, resigning her

sceptre to the spirit of fear, the guardian destiny of the night. As the song became louder and clearer I was enabled to note from whence it came, and rising, proceeded in its direction, when to my surprise, my spirit of gentle melancholy was none other than a red bird perched on the cross, scattering his music over the grave of the scholar and lover of nature. Later I was told that this was the evening custom of this red bird whose protection was safe in the hands of the villagers. "I never," said a village crone, "heard a bird sing so sweetly, but it is not a bird, it's an angel dressed in red that sings on his cross." The song of this bird was fitting to the place, it harmonized with its surroundings, and those who write of his song as dull and monotonous have but studied him in some cramped city bird store. In his native haunts, where his life is free and the chatter of other birds

do not drown his voice, he has a song of his own worth any man's ear. His plumage, too, on a sunshiny day is altogether charming, the dark red of his back blending with the bright scarlet of the rest of his body, the crest raised or lowered with his fancy, the aristocratic bearing, all combine to make him what he is, a handsome bird, and I have never questioned the taste of those Europeans who, considering plumage and song regard him as the prince of American song-birds. Then he is hardy in captivity, does not sulk and droop in his cage if his master treats him intelligently, but takes life as pleasantly as a goldfinch, and in a little time becomes the most sagacious of bird companions. My bird, "Old Kentucky," the gift of a valued friend, was sent to me in '96. He was then but three months old. I put him in the aviary, where he showed signs of discontentment, such as loss of appetite

and sitting as a puff-ball on his perch for hours at a time, and in this mood became the sport of a grayfinch and a Java sparrow. The finch, the worst scoundrel I have met in my bird experience, would chase him to one end of the aviary and getting him in a corner would peck and harrass him until I came to his rescue. The Java sparrow on every meeting would pluck his feathers. It was impossible for him to live and thrive in such barbarous society, so I put him in a cage with a hen canary, which was very tame, and then set the cage on a little table by the edge of my writing desk.

At first he resented such a close companionship by hastily flying from one end of his cage to the other on my least motion, but finding this performance a bore from so many repetitions, and learning from the undisturbed canary that there was no cause for such a fuss, he

gradually got rid of his foolishness until he paid no more attention to my movements.

Now was the time to show my desire for his friendship, when he had cast aside his fear. So I approached his cage at a certain hour, thrice a day, giving him hempseed or a grub, a grub most generally, as the dinner bell rang, and he soon learned to associate the sound of the bell with the grub. I have now two reminders of the dinner hour, a fox terrier which never misses to enter my study at the minute of twelve o'clock to conduct me to the dining hall, his ulterior wish I will not mention, and "Old Kentucky," which at that hour comes to his cage door and tells me plainly that it is time to give him his grub. I often purposely remain after the time to test their patience and on every occasion found they had none. The fox-terrier became impudent and

tugged at my trousers' legs, and the red bird threw up his crest, pecked the wires and told me in sharp speech what he thought of my conduct. The moment I left my chair the quarrel was over, and our old friendship renewed. "Old Kentucky" could not keep spite. I have seen him offer a part of his meal to the gray-finch and suffer that scamp's abuse for his tenderness. This tenderness I have heard spoken of, but an incident that came last spring under my own observation, was convincing. During a sickness of a few weeks that confined me to my room I was unable to visit "Old Kentucky." My absence so preyed on him that he became dull and spiritless, and my household warned me of my coming loss. "Why not bring him in here?" I said, one morning when I was told that he was ruffled up in the bottom of his cage, "while there's life, there's hope."

My household shook their head and muttered wisdom, but "to please the sick" the cage was brought to my bedside. I removed the bird, had a long chat with him, coaxed him to eat a spider and exercise a little around the room, all of which he did at my bidding. His sickness came from my absence, and now that we were united his recovery was magical. Judge of the consternation to the wisdom of my household, when that evening "Old Kentucky" perched on the edge of my water pitcher and gave us an evening concert.

"That will do you good," said the Doctor, "it's better than medicine." I have always thought so.

My first observation on the bobolink was made but a few years ago, though it is more than probable that I have often passed him unnoticed in my extended travels. I was lying in a country mead-

ow, under the shade of a crab-apple tree, reading a book that has been a travelling companion of mine since first I tasted its pages among the islands of the Adriatic. The book was none other than Stoddard's *South Sea Idyls*, of all books of travel that I know of the most bewitching. I have read Melvill's with delight, happily wandered with Louis Becke, but Stoddard alone was capable of making me forget my whereabouts, and leading me whither he chose. He also added to my ambitions, for I have an undying longing to see his golden isles, and summer seas. A book that can make us forget ourselves and our little aims for blissful rest, flavor the imagination with a new delight, give wings to fancy and tickle the memory with pictures worthy of her interest and retention, is indeed a noble book. Now it may be deemed an oddity of mine, when I here state that the mood of the book on

that July morning had something in common with the merry, careless jangle of the bobolink as he crossed the meadow. I was reading *Kahele* and the style so artful, yet so simple and natural, the art hiding art, that I could not get it out of my head but somehow or other the bird and book had an affinity. It may have been my own mind, I cannot tell, I but merely record an impression. The bobolink came very close to my resting place and, lighting in a clump of wild raspberry bushes, soon disappeared from my view, while another bird, as if relieved from duty, flew away in the direction his relief had come. Now here was a little tangle to unfold full of pleasure for an inquisitive bird-lover, so I arose and cautiously walked to the briars, keeping my eye beyond them, for experience will soon tell the observer that birds, whether or not they notice an object of alarm, are too cunning to light in close

vicinity to their nests. As I approached the skirts of the raspberries and made a quick, startling noise, a bird rose from a little declivity covered with large white and yellow field daisies.

Its cry of chink, chink, repeated at brief intervals, made it easy of recognition. The tangle vanished, the nest hidden among the flowers was found, and a little piece of white cotton tied to a sapling, the better to guide my glass in the watch of their movements.

I had read that the bobolink had but a few notes, tiresome from constant repetition, but I was to learn that such a statement was a gross libel on a bird that well deserves a place in the list of our native song birds. I have watched the male bird during mating fever, trying to persuade a shy, young female to come and dwell with him, and the music he made to induce her to accede to his reasonable request was so

wonderful and so unexpected that I made up my mind to add a bobolink to my aviary. For this reason I, every other day, visited my easily discovered nest, and before the birds could fly I had wired in the nest beyond their escape.

A village urchin, noting my walks, lay in ambush until he discovered the secret of my rambles, then he lost no time in robbing the nest and carrying the birds home where from ill-usage they died in a few days. Emboldened by what he called his good luck he was in the habit of following me in all my country strolls, when I hit upon an excellent remedy to rid me of such a persistent nuisance.

My great Dane, Cæsar, had been taught by my neighbor's children to play "Go seek, I'll hide," a game which consisted in sending the dog after some object pointed out to him, generally one of the children, while the sender hid. Now the play of

the dog was to bring the object pointed out to those who had sent him and he accomplished this feat by tugging on the dress and pushing with his great fore shoulders. I left to Leon the pleasant work of filling the boy's ears with tales derogatory to the Dane's character, dwelling especially on his perverted taste for biting boys.

Now Leon painted picturesque fiction on a large canvas. All things being ready I started out, leading the dog, followed by the wily urchin. Once out of town, and far from men and houses, I lay behind a huge boulder and deceiving the boy who sped on at a brisk gait, waited until he was in the dog's sight, then said I, "Cæsar, go and seek." The Dane wagged his tail, looked in my face to see if I really meant such a child's frolic, and then went galloping in the boy's direction, coming up to him before he had time to wheel around

on his tract. I followed and reached the boy just as he was about to lie down in abject fright. I pretended to have much difficulty in affecting his rescue, warned him that the dog would suffer no one to follow his master, dried his tears and dismissed him with a few pennies. I won his affection and ever afterwards had his love, but not his company. I appointed him on my own responsibility as game-protector of the surrounding country at the munificent sum of six and a quarter cents per week and the promise of a pair of pigeons, if, in my judgment, he had acquitted himself honorably in his task.

And I shall not pass him without acknowledging his entire devotion to duty, and the good which came to the feathered tribe. So skilful himself in the pursuit of his early occupation, he turned this skill to his new purpose and to the disgust of his former friends. The urchin who was

capable of robbing a nest and doing so undetected by my gamekeeper, was a rarity. His very name and the close friendship he bore to me gave even to his name a restraining influence. He was wise and in every way exalted this influence by referring to me as one able to jail a boy without judge or jury, and Leon, ordinarily so full of contradiction, was never known to belittle his master's greatness. To these two pillars of the law I entrusted the finding of a bobolink's nest, which commission was duly performed with zeal and pride.

The birds were about to leave the nest, and on our approach, they did so, one of them being hit by Leon's hat and, brought to the ground, was quickly placed in custody by Leon's partner, and this was enough for my purpose. I put this young one in a trap, placed the trap near the old nest and went into the covert from whence I could see without being seen. At my feet

crouched the two boys impatient and restless. In a few minutes the male bobolink, being attracted by the cry of his little one, flew to the trap and after a long inspection entered it to the glorious music of two boyish throats. There is a wonderful fascination in boyish merriment. The old bird in our hands, the young one was allowed freedom for a time.

In the meantime I carefully prepared my plans. I kept the bobolink in a small cage and in a dark room for a fortnight, then I transferred him to the trap as a decoy and started out for his old home. In less than an hour from my arrival there I had trapped his whole family—his wife, and three young ones, now full grown and able to shift for themselves. I carried home the young ones (giving the old couple their freedom and my own good wishes); these I at once placed in a large cage containing yellow birds, American

linnets, vesper sparrows, etc., the harvest of my trap. I fed them on soaked canary seed, eggs and crackers and green stuff, and my bobolinks in a few weeks became actually tame.

One of them, in a month's captivity, became so social that he would perch on the seed dish while I replenished it, and I took good care to show my appreciation of his spirit by dropping in front of him a few hemp seeds now and then which he picked up with avidity. Thus noting his good disposition I set about his training, giving him a cage after his heart, for the bobolink in captivity is an active bird, and placing it in the center of a company of artists. At first his song was a methodless jangle, a note of discord in the choir, a fact which he soon noted, and set about to rectify in a very sensible way, that of learning from his masters. The wise look that came to his young face, and the

attitudes of attention he maintained for days were mirth-provoking to my household. What was our delight when one afternoon he danced on his perch, spread his wings, and gave us a song of much compass and genuine feeling.

True, it was a stolen melody, but so wrought with his own genius as to defeat all criticism. Since then he has added greatly to his compass; only the other day I noticed he had pilfered the sweetest trill in the nonpareil's song, and coming, as it did, between his own merry jangle and the finished music of a German canary, the effect was particularly fine. He has his peculiarities, and all on the interesting side. He loves to bathe, requires a large bathing pan, and takes his bath by jumping into it, beating the water with his wings and curiously working his long legs as if not knowing what to do with them. When he is thoroughly wet

he seeks his perch and waltzes up and down it, spreading wings and tail until dry. He will permit no bird to light on his cage, and carries on a daily battle with a gray finch whose audacity and pugnacity has turned him loose.

If I let him out of the cage he at once seeks this finch, who is always at his pleasure for a fight, and commences battle. The finch's plan of attack is to pull out the head feathers, and such an artful master has he become in this line, that in one encounter he has made poor Bobby bald. I have tried to make them friends, but in vain; like men they glorify in their own foolishness. Will years bring the philosophic mind? Does it in men? And should we not expect it more from them than from birds?

In front of my house is a row of stately English elms, planted by an old Vermont-er, whose acquaintance, judging from the

tales that linger with his memory, I would have loved to have made in the flesh. He was a schoolmaster, but not of the kind nowadays so much in evidence, whose god is some barren text-book, and whose petty rules dwarf all finer striving of the spirit. This schoolmaster was a man, and his energy went passionately out to make men. He taught his students the value of health to soul and body, opened their eyes to the beautiful vision of Nature all around them, and to the majesty of common things. He drove out the narrow, cruel, cat-like, country bigotry, and replaced it with charity, and from this charity came breadth and depth which sweetened their own lives, and helped all others with whom they were brought in contact. Such a schoolmaster is a benediction. His elms, planted after his own fashion, against all the experience and ominous head shaking of the country

prophets, grew marvellously, as if to prop the gentle scholar's theory, and to-day they are stately trees leading to a grassy country lane that bears his name, the pride of a village that bartered over the price of his coffin. When death tapped at his door he went as becomingly as he had lived, leaving his all to his landlady, and little as it was, an old silver watch, his threadbare clothing, and a box of books, be it cheerfully written to her credit that it was more than she sought, for she was a woman with a heart as well as a mind.

Through her three of his books, bearing on their pages a fullness of proofs that they were favorites, came into my possession, a *Virgil*, a *Horace* and a stout well-clad volume of English poetry, being the select works of the British poets in a chronological series, from Ben Jonson to Beattie, with biographical and critical notices by Dr. Aikin.

Who can tell the power and influence of such a book in a sequestered country village fifty years ago! "His English books," said the landlady, "went all around the country, often as far as a hundred miles, and this book that I am giving you was the greatest favorite, and that's the reason that the cover is so thick.

"That cover was put on it by a man that knew it from the first to the last leaf, Jamey Thompson, the lame Scotch shoemaker. Wherever you see a cross, that's Jamey's marking, and Schoolmaster Kimpton used to say Jamey's crosses done the book no harm, for wherever Jamey made a cross any sensible man would halt for a few minutes' thought." Now from long companionship, I, too, can bear the same testimony to Jamey Thompson's cross as did Master Kimpton, and they fill me with wonder at the massive intellect of the man

and the power with which he sought the marrow of a poet. So to Master Kimpton and Jamey Thompson and the kindly old dame I owe many a pleasant hour, sitting under Master Kimpton's elms, elms which brought me another pleasure, and one which ministered to a mood as successfully as Dr. Aikin's book.

They were the only haunt of the golden robins who came up from the South early and were only driven away by our piercing winds, and after rearing their broods, as a rule, in perfect safety. I have often in the fine June mornings, dispensed with sleep to hear from the elm choir the mat-in hymn to greet Mother Nature. It would generally commence with the oriole's slow, mellow note, announcing the mystic rite, then came the rich, bright, clear, piercing music of the robin, followed by the chants of the whole feathered kingdom rising and falling, now gushing forth

from the trees as if their leaves were breathing melody, now dying away as if it were but the zephyr's first kiss. From his heights, the matin hymn finished, the golden robin would fly to an orchard near by where he spent most of the working day in quest of food, for which action I had to reason long and often with the owner who held that this bird was a bud-destroyer as well as an insect feeder, certainly a perversity of original taste like that of the bullfinch, sparrow, etc., and the formation of an artificial one that has made him many enemies.

My duty, however, was to the bird, so I took the other side of the argument, using every means lawful as an advocate to mystify and confound that most dull and uninteresting of men, the retired farmer who, after years of toil and penury, settles down in our rural village to whine away the balance of life.

I was only successful when I hung up in the post office a huge dodger done in charcoal and signed by a committee of women, whose sympathies, always on the best side, I had aroused, threatening dire punishment to all bird destroyers, and offering a fine for any and all information that would jail the culprits. This had the desired effect, "For," said the farmer with emphasis, "I will get into no controversy with women in the town I live in," wherein he made a philosophic observation. I have had an odd idea that the traditional picture of Uncle Sam was after a drawing of a retired farmer, caught in his whine against the increase of village taxes. Though later by exact observation, I was forced to admit that the golden robin did now and then destroy a few buds, which information I was careful to keep hidden, but small indeed is the soul who could begrudge him these little peculations. My

interest in his behalf was appreciated, and by putting food in the lawn after the hatching time I was permitted to study him and his less handsomely clad wife at short range.

In the bright sunshine it was a pretty sight to see the male bird in his orange and black, strut up and down the lawn with a pride and show of power that was really laughable but quite excusable in so handsome a bird. I remember one of those instances when his pride had, much to my disgust, a sudden fall.

A pair of bold, bad sparrows that I had in confinement, and whose liberty had been gladly granted, mated and built in the porch surrounding my house, and noticing my affection for the golden robins determined to drive them off at all hazards. I witnessed their first attack.

Flying from the porch, without the slightest warning, they lit one on each

side of the gay fellow, and gave battle, pecking furiously and with loud chatter his head. At first taken unawares he soon recovered and drawing his head far back on his body, shot out his long, piercing bill with a rapidity and aim that soon drove the sparrows to the elms where they held a lengthy converse, then they flew away, and in less than five minutes returned with at least a dozen more of their fellows who lost no time in attacking the object of their assault. It was useless to fight against such opponents, so he escaped sadly mauled, followed by a chattering throng, boasting, I have no doubt, of their miserable victory. From that day I deputed my boy, Leon, to check the audacity of the saucy sparrows and keep them off the lawn, which he did during my absence by transferring the pair and their brood to an old and unused lot. Another experience is worth relating. I had

watched through my glass the building of an oriole's nest, a long, pendulous pouch swinging from a most delicate elm twig, yet so screened that no untrained eye might detect it. "This," thought I, "is a nest safe from marauding urchins and hen-hawks," so I continued my observations learning that the male bird sat on the eggs, as well as the female, and during the day much more constantly, and such chivalry is well worthy of praise. At length the young birds came, three in number, giving active work to the parent birds, whose cunning in entering and leaving the nest was a constant puzzle, and that especially so with the female whose darker color baffled oftentimes my most determined efforts. She would leave the lawn, dive into the tree, feed her little ones, while I, oblivious of her presence, still waited for her coming. How petulant I was with her uncalled for, as I thought,

diplomacy, but later I was willing to admit her right and good sense, and to be taught that birds have a reason for their acting.

One morning taking *Dr. Aikin* in my hand, as I used to call the old schoolmaster's book, I left the house for a tramp in the fields. As I passed the elm I heard a loud noise which I at once identified as a bird-cry of distress, and looking in the direction of the sound soon discovered the cause. A red squirrel was cautiously testing the twig prior to making a morning meal of the young *golden robins, while their helpless parents were fluttering and complaining in a most piteous manner. Then I learned the necessity of the bird's cunning. There was but one thing to do and that to be done quickly. I returned to the house, snatched my gun and returning found the

*Oriole and golden robin are the same bird

murderer ready to perpetrate his fell purpose. On my arrival, possibly deterred by Leon's loud voice and the bark of the dogs, he fell back for a moment, and as he did so I aimed and fired, killing him instantly, shattering the twig and bringing to a convenient limb the nest which was hastily sought by Leon. Its occupants were put in a purposely made cage and hung high up in the elm trunk, where the old birds lavished on them their wealth of care. I afterward transferred them to an aviary for soft-billed birds, where they at once followed the regime of the other prisoners. Two of these birds I lost from inexperience, in the moult, but the third, a male bird, is very lively and, from my interest in him, I have been able to discover a health-giving diet, consisting of mocking bird food, meat scraps, eggs and grated crackers, berries and plenty of green food. His song as yet is low and

timid, but I hope, under the tutelage of his wild brethren, that it will gain in strength and compass. I am having a new cage built for his convenience, flat and capacious, for he is apt to hurt his head on a round top, and he loves room. It will certainly be pleasant in the summer sunshine to hang his cage in the shade of the elms, and listen to the choir that will come at his call.

There is one book whose fascination never grows old.

It was in my youth a volume of continual delight, and what it was then it is to-day when youth has vanished. I refer to *Travels in Tartary, Thibet and China*, by M. Huc. I well remember how for its sake I once suffered corporal punishment from one of those teachers whose brutal instincts, if I may say so, survive all culture. While he talked glibly of the ennobling office of teacher,

he debauched it by his cruelty. He was one of those little men so common to our civilization like the fire-ant described by Mr. Bates, "that seem to attack persons out of sheer malice." My copy, the little two volume red-edition, was confiscated, and with this admonition, that "my love for such stuff was a very evident proof of the weakness of my intellect."

But I thank heaven that no such teacher, or the dread of his ferule, could keep me from "such stuff." For it is the stuff that enters most readily as a permanent part of life. When the dull lessons and bald explanations of the school-master, the work of weary years, are forgotten with a pleasing thankfulness, memory holds sacredly the impression of such books as Abbe Huc's. But I am, as the schoolman said, straying from my thesis, which, in the present paper, relates to the house sparrow, and I only intended to use the

name of Abbe Huc in connection with a quotation, when the image of the school-master, still green in my memory, led me on. A plain case of association of ideas. Says Abbe Huc, that most acute and veracious of travellers: "The sparrow is a regular cosmopolite; we have found it wherever we have found man; ever with the same vivid, petulant, quarrelsome character, ever with the same sharp, angry cry. It is, however, to be remarked that in Tartary, China, and Thibet it is, perhaps, more insolent than in Europe, because, there, nobody makes war upon it, and its nest and brood are piously respected. You see it boldly enter the house, live there on familiar terms, and pick up at its leisure the remnants of man's food. The Chinese call it "Kio-nio-eul (bird of the family)." The Abbe, just in that paragraph, shows his one native power of observation. And he wrote, too, a good

many years before an imaginative American naturalist made the fanciful discovery that the sparrow followed the fortune of the Anglo Saxon race.

I must confess it was just on account of this vivid, petulant, quarrelsome character that my interest in the sparrow grew. I had seen him in many lands, and he was ever the same saucy, self-possessed, pugnacious bird, giving his fellows to understand that he possessed the earth, and if they did not acquiesce in his opinion, not hesitating a moment to prove his assumption at the edge of his bill. I have seen him on the thatch roof of the Irish cottier, amid the turrets of Notre Dame, in the dirty alley ways that lead from Italian streets, and among the snow-drifts of the north, and always with a love I could not curb.

He was oftentimes dirty, ragged and smoke-dyed, but one quality he always

possessed, and that was manliness. He was sufficient for himself. Wherever met he was on easy terms with his surroundings. He seems above all birds insensible to fear. An old soldier once told in my hearing, that during a hard fought battle, where the artillery was much in evidence, the sparrows continued their chattering as if there was neither danger nor wonderment nigh. And with this bravery he has another quality which is generally associated with it, at least in books, and that is cunning. All the heroes I have read of were men of cunning, not in the limited and perverted sense of the word in these days, but in that of its first sense as it came from the mint of speech. Then it meant knowledge, and only in that meaning would I apply it to the sparrow, for of cunning in the ordinary sense he possesses not a particle.

This cunning gives to his bravery, just

as it did to Caesar's and Napoleon's, an advantage. He knows his enemies, their plans, when to fight and when to run away, when to expose his bravery and be a hero, when to withdraw it and remain both heroic and sensible. His enemies are so numerous and so persistent in their attacks that there can be no doubt but his cunning is a growth.

The city sparrow is to the country sparrow what the street gamin is to the country bumpkin. He can devise means to accomplish an object that his country brother would never dream of. In one of the down-town streets of New York, noted for its dirt and the multitude and diversity of its smells, I saw, one bright Sunday morning, a male sparrow trying to carry a piece of twine to his nest.

All his efforts, and they were many, were futile. Finally he dropped the twine,

walked up and down meditating for a few seconds, and then flew away.

Another sparrow immediately took up the task, and by coiling the string around his body rose in flight, to be met by the returning sparrow and his wife in mid-air and forced to the ground, where he was soundly thrashed for his theft. The two conquering sparrows set about the business that had brought them, and seizing the twine in their bills by that principle of co-operation, so unknown to the working men among whom they lived, bore their burden easy and safely aloft as a lining for their nest. I have purposely put twine on the lawn of my country-house to test the country sparrow's intelligence, but he acted like his enemy, the country farmer; when not able to carry the thread, he would neither seek help nor permit others to try their strength, and I regretted that there was no way of teaching him what

suffering and environment had taught his city brother. Suffering is the school-master of birds and beasts, as well as men, and here is a little tale that may bolster my epigrammatic declaration. A female sparrow had made her nest in a corner of the piazza for three years. She became very tame, and to a young member of my family a pet. Her food was put in a little plate in a sheltered portion of the porch and a dish for drinking and bath purposes. One night, in the presence of Leon, in conversation with an invalid lady, whose enthusiasm for the sparrow is contagion to the listener, I ventured to remark that I would add a sparrow to my aviary for the purpose of studying out leisurely the coming winter the many lovable qualities that my host declared they possessed. Leon, who was ever willing to please my slightest known fancy, while drawing up his nose at the lady's "talk," was bent on

giving me a chance to satisfy my whim. Business called me from home for a few days, and on my return there was a female sparrow in my aviary. At the same time I was informed that little Kit had deserted the porch, and the young and fiery member of my family did not hesitate to couple my boy's name with the sparrow's disappearance. Reaching the aviary I found a sparrow incessantly flying from one end of the cage to the other, and in her fury driving the other occupants into a similar state. She had killed a couple of yellow-birds, the head of one of them showing conclusive evidence of her flesh devouring tendency. I had but to open the aviary door when Kit, as it proved to be, flew into an adjoining room and was speedily captured. Her struggles for freedom while in my hand were interesting to those who would study the pathetic fight a wild thing makes to escape

man's possession. I had previously noticed and had been told that a sparrow kept around the porch since Kit's captivity, so to the porch I went and finding there a lonesome looking bird let Kit loose. I shall not readily forget what followed. Kit flew to the barn roof followed by this bird who proved to be Kit's husband.

His delight knew no bounds ; he danced around her, spread his wings, proclaimed again and again his unabated and undying love, kissed her fervently a dozen times, preened her feathers and made the whole place ring with her welcome.

All through this she showed that admirable shyness which adds to female grace and loveliness.

They arose at a low quick twitter of the male bird and proceeded to the nest, where three little birdies had long mourned for their mother. Kit never again came to the porch. All our efforts to

induce her to continue her old time ways were unsuccessful; suffering had taught her the reed-like quality of human friendship. My next experience was more pleasant. I found one morning on the lawn, a little after sunrise, a young male sparrow that had just left the nest. As he was in the way of the village cats I took pity on him and carried him to my study the better to attend to his wants. In a week's time he was picking, and all trouble being now over I gave him a cage and placed it bordering that of a German-canary, whose song I was desirous he should learn. In doing this I had little faith, I must confess, in the imitative qualities of the sparrow. The less hopes one has the more enthusiasm when these hopes are far surpassed. In dealing with birds, patience is the golden wand that brings so many unexpected things. The summer, autumn and winter

passed without my sparrow showing the slightest sound uncommon to his race, and I had lost hope. Every morning I waited for a note, learned from the canary, and was disappointed with the sharp, resonant voice of an ordinary sparrow. With the coming of spring my house was filled with melody, and listening to it one afternoon near dusk, I thought I caught a beginner's song so easily known from its shortness and lack of strength.

Next morning I put myself in position to watch, and to my surprise and, I need not add, my delight, I discovered that my sparrow was surely if slowly, mastering the canary's song. This unfolding of his imitative power went on day after day, growing richer and stronger until the pupil proved superior to the master. To-day, I value him beyond most birds in my aviary, and this valuation is based on his merits as a musician. To the canary's

song he has added many notes, some original, others stolen, but so infused with his own manner and temperament as to make the song his own. He is like the poet who has drawn from many sources, but making them his own by stamping upon them an individuality. Captivity has not only given this bird a song, but an improved plumage. The grey has become softer, the white more brilliant, and the black of deeper lustre. Few, on first sight, would take him for an English sparrow; but he never forgets the race from whence he came, evident in his notes when a wild sparrow comes within hearing. He takes easy to petting, and shows an affection to his master only equalled by that of the gold-finch. He loves to bathe, to preen his feathers and keep himself neat and tidy.

Another and greater love is for the sunshine, and I have taken care that this

love shall have fullest indulgence. When the sun breaks out and fills the windows with his golden rays, life's elixir, and bathes the room with light and heat, the sparrow sings him a song of worship, and then spreading his wings, basks for hours in the blessed sunshine. If after one of these sun baths I open his cage door, he immediately flies to me.

He is, in the words of Catullus, "A honeyed darling."

There is a little street in Rome that to me is full of memories. It is called the San Sebastianello, and runs from the Piazza di Spagna to the Pincian. It is one of these little Roman streets that at first sight seems dull, dirty and commonplace, at least to an American traveler, but it grows day by day into your esteem, takes on new beauties and colors, until you are willing to admit that your first impressions were foolish, and in that New World haste,

whose opinions grate so harshly on European ears. "It was," says a writer, "the strolling place of Hawthorne," and I do not doubt his assertion.

When he was making studies for his *Marble Faun*, it was only natural that he should take this near cut to the Pincian.

No day passes without somebody of note walking in his footsteps. I have seen there a renowned German historian muttering to himself, what I took to be some wonderful discovery in early Roman History, for I was told, as a great secret, that the great man, at home or abroad, was ever in deep study, and that muttering was the sign board of some historical achievement. I have seen on its pavements an English poet, his long, black, glossy hair skillfully combed back, making himself an object of attention and remark; an exiled cardinal sauntering leisurely, dreaming of his own land, I thought, and

troops of Roman students on their way to a little shrine further up the street, some in bright, others in sombre garb, but blending so artfully in their constant passing and repassing as to fill the eye with refreshing color. And may I not add to these the horde of beggars, so fantastically clad, that come thrice daily to the English Convent begging food with the most piteous appeals, and the most absurd gestures?

But not for those things do I cherish the San Sebastianello; though memory, forgetting incidents of much more importance, clings tenaciously to these small scenes, but for a little ristorante on your right hand, on the way to the Pincian, three stone-flights up and then a turn to the left, kept by my most worthy friends, Giovanni and Catarina Rocco, brother and sister, the most charming couple I ever expect to meet in one house. They

had seen better days, were once in opulence, but of those days not a word.

As Giovanni, bless his old heart, used to say, "Our patrons don't care what we have been, our business is to please them, and that, signor, we really try to do; our misfortunes are our own; strangers do not take kindly to them," and then he would graciously lift his little turban, bow and ask the signor's pleasure. I made it a point to be the last for meals, and as I had, through my love for Giovanni and Catarina brought a few customers to their table, my peculiarity in this respect was overlooked, and I could idle over my dinner, and have a chat with Giovanni now at leisure. He had been formerly in the diplomatic service and later proprietor of restaurants in Cairo and Constantinople, and his knowledge of the Orient was that of a born traveller and skilled observer. He possessed a wonderful memory and that

happy faculty of selection which never tires the listener, but constantly stimulates him by deftly changing scenes, color and atmosphere at the slightest prick of impatience. Giovanni was a true Arabian story-teller.

One afternoon he invited me to the kitchen to show me how scrupulously clean they were and that I might be able, as he said, "with a hearty conscience," to recommend his little ristorante to my friends. I pleaded that no visit was needed to urge me to interest my friends in patronizing the most home-like ristorante in Rome, but to no avail, so I put myself in Giovanni's hands and followed him and his sister to the kitchen, which bore satisfying proof of their cleanliness and tidiness. While my good hosts were explaining the different kinds of cookery, my eye, and I might truthfully add, my mind, was on a large cage that stood near

the window. At my first opportunity I asked Giovanni what the cage was for.

“Tell the signor,” said Catarina, and then, woman-like, she continued, “my poor brother has had his weaknesses; one of them was for all kinds of birds, and in those days he had what he wanted, we had money then, signor. Money can be made a great blessing. Giovanni has but a few Paddy birds in the cage; why he keeps them I don’t know, perhaps to make him think of the past and keep him sad.”

“But, Catarina,” said I, “Giovanni never speaks of his trouble.”

“Ah, signor,” said Catarina, with a sigh and a head shake, “you remember the proverb, *I gran dolori sono muti.*” (Great griefs are silent), and with this saying she led the way.

“This is the work of my odd moments,” said Giovanni as I touched the most beautiful cage I have ever seen, a real bit of

love and artistry. "It was done after the model of a Moslem mosque."

The inside was most ingeniously contrived. Here were sliding doors, brass-springs, that the bird by lighting on, found both feed and water, swings, perches and a magnificent bath that was filled or emptied at the touch of Giovanni's little finger. It had been built for the accommodation of forty birds and once held that number, but with death, and Giovanni's poverty, the worshippers dwindled down to two Java sparrows. It was my first sight of such birds, and my eyes at once betrayed to their master my interest and admiration, while his eyes in turn shot back at me his pleasure. His birds were very active. The moment his old, laughing face was pressed against the wires they came to the cage door, opened it by pulling with their bills a little blue ribbon, and flew to his arms making a rough noise as they did so. He

had taught them many amusing tricks such as dancing to his lilt, giving the foot at the word of command, and firing off a miniature cannon. These tricks were a constant source of merriment to Giovanni, who would rub his hands in glee, and laugh until the tears trickled down his cheeks. Catarina at first objected to this exhibition, thinking that it might displease the foreigner and lessen his esteem for her brother, but learning that I, too, could find laughter and happiness in such little things, she allowed her own natural self to play the part and laughed with us. And it is, reader, on account of Giovanni and his tales, Catarina and the Java sparrows and all their tricks that the San Sebastianello lingers lovingly in my memory.

In leaving Rome I vowed to own some day a Java sparrow, but years, and they fly so fast, went by before my vow became a fact. During some of those years

I had no home that I could call my own, and a man may not ride his hobbies in the homes of others, and even when I possessed a home I was kept from my vow by the threat of an ignorant bird-seller that Java sparrows would not live in my cold climate.

This man and his likes have destroyed in me all respect for popular wisdom. And here I remark how little of your widely accepted wisdom will stand the test of an analysis.

In Montreal one evening, as I was walking at my leisure along the street that led to the station, from whence I was to take the train for home, I met a bird-vender, whose sole capital was a hen-canary, whom the rogue tried by much show of reason and bogus science to make me believe was a male, and a tailless, bald-headed Java sparrow which seemed to be, as the phrase goes, "on its last legs." Just

then an Italian organ grinder across the street played an Italian air that I had often heard Giovanni whistle, and the bird and music appealing to my memory awoke the past that told of Giovanni, and for his sake I bought the bird and brought him home. There was loud laughter in my house, when I produced my new addition to the aviary, and the prophecy that night was that my Giovanni would be dead in the morning. I had to submit to a lecture on my foolishness and the ease with which a bird or book-vender could empty my pockets. One audacious member of the household informed me that I should have a guardian appointed to deliver me from such sharpers. I was so put out by their sinister warnings and dogmatic prophecies, that I arose three times during the night to have a look at my sparrow, returning each time more convinced that he would live to give the lie to warnings

and prophecy, a text ever after, with which I could silence my wise household. Morning came and Giovanni, aroused from his stupor, hopped to the seed-dish and with much spirit and dash gave battle to every bird that approached it, uttering a croaking sound.

“No fear of that bird dying,” said my household. “Consistency,” says Emerson, “is the bugbear of little minds.” I am proving nothing when I remark that consistency is not to be found in my household. Giovanni, on account of old memories and his bravery in living in the face of so much harsh comment, won my heart and he was petted and feasted above all his companions. No bird can relish attention more than a Java sparrow. He takes to kindness as readily as a cat to milk or a dog to bones, and like them his taste never varies. The old proverb about killing with kindness has its exception in the

Java sparrow. Giovanni cast aside his torn coat, grew fat, put on another garb as tight-fitting as a new kid glove. In matters of taste in dress he is easily the prince. I know that other birds have finer and more beautiful clothes, but none wear them so neatly nor look so well in them as this Beau Brummel. Let me describe him as he walks across the room picking his every step, an acknowledged weakness of every dandy. He is a little larger than our ordinary sparrow, built after the bull-finch style. He has a thick beak of a rose color hue that gives the head a canny appearance. It seems much too large, but as nature does not generally make mistakes I am willing to admit that it is just the thing he needs.

The body is of soft gray, so smooth and neat that at first sight it seems to be but covered with one feather, the head and throat are black, and the cheeks pure

white. With all this finery and style Giovanni carries a courage that is almost beyond belief. Arouse his spirit as so many of the birds do by sneering at his clothes, and he will fight, and with a pluck and push that the detractors cannot contend against. I have seen him attack the parrot for a dish of hempseed, and knowing that his motto was death but no surrender, I stopped the fight after the first engagement, much, I must admit, to Polly's disgust. His manner of bathing is most peculiar; when the bobolink enters the bath, a circular tin basin, Giovanni sits on the edge of it while Bobby spatters him with water. After his bath he takes his sleep which often lasts a couple of hours, and woe to the bird that breaks in on his dreams, for I am firmly convinced that birds do dream. He cannot sing, neither can I, as I once found out to my cost, so how can I blame him, but he has gifts that

atone for this loss. He is a brave, manly, social, funny, little fellow, my Giovanni, and much as I admire music, these characteristics are still dearer to me.

In walking some years ago through an unattractive part of Washington, strolling without any definite purpose, as is my wont in large cities, I was brought to stop in front of a wooden structure dignified by the name house, but bearing little resemblance to what ordinarily fits that word, by the marvellous song of a bird.

In front of the door sat an old negress, wrinkled and grizzled, humming some ditty that suffering had crushed from her race. She seemed pleased at my interest in her pet, and looking up from her needle-work, accosted me with one of those broad smiles that in reality are little laughs.

“Plays his throat pretty nicely,” said the old dame, as her eyes sought the object of her speech. “He is just as you

see him every hour of the day ; that throat is always busy."

Taking an empty soap box that lay near at hand, I turned it up on its ends and all unbidden, but not unwelcome, I took my seat to gossip a while and hear music that brought, as no other music could, many memories of long lost days—those days of the Barmecides, when youth was strong, and laughter loving, and gorgeous dreams the only spinning of the brain. Ah! those merry days when I wandered where fancy drove me, the present blown away with an idle day, the future full of grand designs and lordly actions.

What boots it for some frontless creature, who calls himself a philosopher and rounds his life in a system, to tell me that I was vagabondizing in those days, gathering wool, building castles in Spain and a variety of epithets which seem to

mean much and mean nothing! I should sneer at his system and tell him that the only time in life that I have been a philosopher was in those very days, for then was I content with myself and my surroundings, and by this means found a happiness, whose loss has ever since been my quest. And any picture of those days would be wanting in accuracy had it not a word of the mocking bird. My wanderings lay in the South, from Kentucky to Old Mexico, and the South is the home, the landscape of this bird. Here he is the regal master of the grove, the woodland, the orchard and the straggling hedge. In the most unexpected places, in the most unfrequented nooks and corners, his tantalizing throat raises you at one moment to the skies, at another reminds you that your feet are still planted on mother earth, and that some of her children are near you.

He has, as no other bird I know of, the power of imitating his atmosphere. I often watched one of these birds, whose favorite seat was the highest branch of a tall tree. I could recognize him by the band of white on his wings before the concert began. His first notes were scarcely audible, and had I not known the rogue I would have wagered a bet that they were those of the blue bird, and what would have been my feeling when these notes were immediately followed by the mellow whistle of the cardinal. After these deceptions he would leave mimicry aside and for an hour pipe his own exquisite, natural song, and then as if inspired by some evil spirit turn in a moment the tune, and give in quick succession a whole series of diabolical utterances. The spirit minstrel had become a barnyard comedian.

A young poet who was my companion in those philosophic, rambling days, (he

is now a lawyer, the poet dead in him, and conventionality where wisdom once held sway), suggested that we should find the nest of this finished warbler, and, like true philosophers, rear the young, albeit we, ourselves, could boast of no permanent home. Youth, I love you for your contempt of that miserable, cautious old fellow, Experience, who bothers the life out of age and keeps men from performing many a noble action by his easy-tongued warnings from the past. So the poet and I watched the movements of the bird, with malice prepense, heard his song, while we planned his captivity, if opportunity came, and that of his helpless children. That which we most admired and most praised had wrought his ruin. It was a story with which history is conversant from the days of Homer to our own time. The gifts of the gods bring death as often as glory. After much observation and careful search-

ing the nest was discovered a few rods from its favorite tree, and on our approaching it the female rose, perched above it, uttering cries of distress, which brought the male at once to her assistance. Their boldness and bravery I have never seen equalled; they kept near their nest and disputed every inch of ground with us. We found in the nest three fledglings that showed a depth of yellow mouth the moment our fingers touched their rather loosely built abode.

No sooner had we withdrawn, than the male, seeing his spouse quietly seated on her brood, betook himself to his accustomed place and poured out his thanks to his guardian deity with that full, free and fervor-tipped note which is the privilege of liberty, whether in man or bird.

As we sat entranced by this teeming melody, the poet repeated the lines of Rodman Drake, and they catch as near

as poetry can the mocking bird's song:

“Soft and low the song began :
I scarcely caught it as it ran
Through the melancholy trill
Of the plaintive whip-poor-will,—
Through the ringdove's gentle wail,
Chattering jay and whistling quail,
Sparrow's twitter, cat-bird's cry,
Red bird's whistle, robin's sigh ;
Black bird, blue bird, swallow, lark,
Each his native note might mark.

“Oft he tried the lesson o'er,
Each time louder than before ;
Burst at length the finished song,—
Loud and clear it poured along ;
All the choir in silence heard,
Hushed before this wondrous bird ;
All transported and amazed,
Scarcely breathing, long I gazed.

“Now it reached the loudest swell,
Lower, lower, now it fell,—
Lower, lower, lower, still,
Scarce it sounded o'er the rill.
Now the warbler ceased to sing,
Then he spread his russet wing,
And I saw him take his flight
Other regions to delight.”

“I would not have the heart to take those birds,” said the poet, after finishing his quotation and meditating a few minutes in silence, “it would be criminal, like thieving from heaven.” My dignified friend the lawyer who in these days laughs at my “bird hobbies,” was in those times both poet and philosopher, and in his speech is the proof. He has fallen from his high estate to be one of the struggling, discontented crowd. He is an illustration to the saying of St. Beuve, “that every man carries within him a dead poet.”

And as I sat on the edge of the soap box, memories as the above thronged my mind, and the old dame noting my mood fell also to dreaming, and there we sat, trying to gather together a few threads of the vanished past. “If I only had a better cage for him,” said the negress as she roused me from my dreaming, “he would look much better,

and be more at home. He is a Virginy bird; my brother's son brought him here; he's for sale, Mister, you seem to be taken with him." The old lady had spoken the truth; I was certainly in love with the bird, but there were many obstacles to circumvent any desire I had to possess her pet. I was on a lecture tour, the most undesirable of occupations, and although I had many friends in Washington I did not wish to trouble them with the keeping and shipping of a bird, so with many flattering phrases in praise of her pet, and with some sorrow for not being able to make the purchase, I rose from my improvised seat, bade the negress good-bye, taking care at the next corner to make a memorandum of the name of the street and the exact location of the curious little house. Why did I do this?

I could not then nor now adduce a

reason. A few months after, while entertaining a bird-lover, who was on his way to Washington, I told him of my experience there and gave him the note I had made.

A month after his departure Leon came running to my room, his eyes kindling with fire, his whole body swaying with passionate delight, holding in his hand a bird cage, followed by my curious and impatient household. The tramping of feet and the barking of dogs had told me that something unusual had happened. I had no time to question Leon, for with his entrance he shouted, dancing with joy, "A new bird, a new bird, just got him at the express office. He's come from away off, and the expressman says he can sing more in an hour than all the birds you have in your house could do in a year."

With the bird came a letter telling of the joy it gave my friend to visit the old

negress who thought me "a very absent-minded man," and to purchase at a cost of two dollars her mocking-bird. He playfully added that "the cage went with the bird, but he did not dare to send the bird in such bad company."

The long journey and the change of climate kept the bird sulky and gloomy for over three months, to Leon's disgust and disrespect for the expressman's wisdom. But on a Sunday afternoon, as I sat reading a volume of Dr. Newman's musical prose, I was made glad by the mocking-bird's voice. We had been feeding him on a well-loved dish, meal-worm grubs, and he could no longer be angry with us, seeing our attentions.

Since then his song has been constant, his mimicry unsurpassed. He is Leon's pet and this means the best of care. I confess at times he is a little disturbing, but then that is but one side of his nature.

and there is nobody without flaws. "Madame," says the villain in the novel, apologizing for himself, "there are spots in the sun."

I have here and there in these pages spoken of a grayfinch in terms anything but complimentary, nor am I now going to make an apology. My desire is rather to make him better known, and by doing so prove that I have in no way libelled him.

And I shall begin his history by a frank statement of how he came into my possession. A friend had sent me *Views and Reviews* by Mr. Henley, since a great favorite of mine, a saucy, strong, pungent book of criticism, with the request that I should read it at once and send him my thoughts as to its merit. Now I sat in my library, doing this at my friend's bidding, when Leon entered, and without more ado made me acquainted with his mind.

"I thought the doctor told you not to

sit too steady at your desk. This is a fine day, and you can read just as well in the fields as in here. It is a good day for trapping, and if you want I will hitch Molly (our favorite pony) and take the dogs along, and go where there are lots of birds." A peculiarity of Leon's mind was that it had to empty itself before asking an answer.

It was one of those minds that cling tenaciously to a subject, until it is either satisfied or tickled with something new. I heard the boy with some impatience as my interest was just then in what Mr. Henley was saying of Matthew Arnold:

"For the present is a noisy and affected age; it is given overmuch to clamorous devotion and extravagant repudiation; there is an element of swagger in all its words and ways; it has a distressing and immoral turn for publicity. Matthew Arnold's function was to protest against its

fashions by his own intellectual practise, and now and then to take it to task and call it to order." Leon knew my ways and waited until I had put a mark in the book, closed it, and rising hid it in my pocket, then merriment seized his feet and laughter lit his eyes.

"The pony will be ready in a few minutes," he cried, as he hurried down the stairs. In less than half an hour we were on our way, and here follows in the manner of the olden time, a truthful reckon of our cavalcade. Leon was the driver. I sat beside him with a trap cage and yellow-bird decoy. In the well of the buggy were wicker cages for our captives. At our feet lay Jack, a champion fox-terrier and a most conceited dandy, jealous of the slightest attention paid to his fellows. Sometimes in front of the buggy, frolicking sometimes behind it were the two great Danes of noble ancestry and lordly mien,

Cæsar and Juno, and the suave and decorous St. Bernards, Helen of Troy, and Pompey of Rome. No wonder that the wayfarers stopped to have a sight at such a curious spectacle. But on we went unmindful of the stupid gaze or the comments of heavy, dull tongues, Leon conjuring up dreams of the birds that were eagerly waiting our coming to enter the trap, while I was equally wool-gathering, even if I thought the wool of better quality. Arriving at a green country lane, edged with golden-rod, daisies, and here and there a shy violet, we turned in and after a few miles came to a large meadow that bordered on the river. Turning the pony loose to graze at her will, we set out to select a suitable place for our trap, as well as a covert for ourselves. Here I had better remark, lest I scandalize some reader, that we had the permission of the owner of the meadow to give Molly her liberty.

In one corner of the field we found a little grove, which suited all our purposes. It had a stream of cool, fresh water running through it with here and there many a cozy nook fit for lithe-limbed Adonis to sleep in. I sought one of these, leaving the bird-trapping and luncheon-making to my indefatigable boy who was as surely born for life in the open as the chipmunk that hurried over the rickety fence with winning grace, or the birds that sang over his head. The cool grass, the pleasant breeze, the maples' shade, the brook's song, the birds' music, and the charm of the place all lulled me to soft, refreshing sleep, and Léon, hearing the doctor remark how necessary it was for me, kept rule and silence among the dogs, allowing me to wake up naturally.

As I did so he accosted me with a smile that I had learned to associate with victory. I needed no voice to tell me that the liberty

of some captive was in his keeping. But his story I had to hear; it was part of the triumph. I prefer his own boyish way of telling to any art-setting that I could give it.

“Didn’t I tell you that there were lots of birds here.” (He thought he held the proof in his hands.) “Just as soon as you went asleep I set my trap, and, in less time than I can tell you, there were a dozen birds flying around it, but this fellow (meaning the bird he held in his hand) drove them all away and nearly killed the decoy. Just as soon as a bird would come near the cage, he became a regular lunatic, bobbing up and down his head, spreading out his wings, and jumping all over the trap.”

“But how did you take him?” I asked, breaking in on the excited boy’s graphic tale. Then flashed his eyes. I had brought him to that part of the story which re-

counts his own glory, by all means to him the most interesting part. "I drove him away," continued the boy, "more than twenty times, so I gave him more chances than he deserved. At last I could stand him no longer, every time he went away he came back bolder, so I sat down and began to think what I could do with him. Then a thought came to me all at once. I went and put the decoy into one part of the trap, sprung it and left the other part open for his Highness," and the boy gazed in triumph on his captive and laughed until the tears came prompted, no doubt, by an admiration of his own cleverness. "As soon as this was done, back he comes, and seeing no bird in the under part of the cage he flew on the trap door and, in his love for a fight with the other bird, went in. He fought like a Trojan before I could get him out." Leon was the boastful possessor of not a few classical

phrases which he had learned on his rambles with me. He associated with the name Trojan, the highest compliment he could pay to brawn and grit. I brought the bird home, and put him in a large cage that contained finches, Java sparrows, yellow-birds and bobolinks. In the morning, on entering my study, I was surprised to see him thoroughly at home. In a week he was so tame or bold, which I know not, that he ate out of the seed dish while I filled it, and now and then pecked violently at my fingers. From this time henceforward his conduct became unparalleled in my long experience with cage-birds. He is the most powerful bird of his kind I have seen, his legs being larger, stronger by far than ordinary, and his claws short and thick.

He made up his mind that the seed-dish and water pot were there for his own private use, and acted accordingly.

From early morning until dark he kept up a continual warfare, chasing and beating every bird that dared to eat or drink.

To one of the bobolinks he took such an aversion that he would follow him for hours, emitting a low, hissing sound. When he came within his reach he set to work to pluck him in the most cruel manner, and his delight after one of these battles was very evident. He would sit on the perch, spread his wings, erect his tail feathers, shake his head and make a strange and indescribable noise. On several occasions he became so frenzied that he fell from his perch and rolled in the bottom of the cage. I was constrained to give him the liberty of the room, but here again his fighting propensities made trouble. He spent his days in flying from cage to cage challenging the occupants to combat. A chipping sparrow that would not remain in the cage and was easily able

to pass out of any cage I possess, was so abused and driven around by this grayfinch that it would pass the day on the edge of my waste-basket, its only place of safety from his rude assaults. I put this chippy in the cage and so thoroughly had he pestered it, that to this day it has not made the slightest attempt to escape. Liberty can be made oppressive as well as captivity.

This bird has, to use the words of a friend, "some marked peculiarities;" one of them is the manner of his bathing. He does not, according to bird custom, pass half an hour away fooling with the water, but like a veteran swimmer boldly plunges into the basin and strikes out with head and claws. My presence makes no difference, in fact he rather enjoys it, as it generally means a few hempseed, of which he is passionately fond, and for which he counts no efforts too great.

As an amusement I have given him a

few seeds, then went to a cage and deposited some there, which he was quick to note. As soon as he had greedily eaten his own portion he would fly to the cage and try, by the most absurd and laughable means, to obtain what had been given to his fellows and, baulked in this attempt, return to me as if begging for more. His memory is excellent, a statement which is proven by many tests I have made. He has found his way from the kitchen up stairs to my study on various occasions, knows his cage and the manner of opening the door, and after six months' separation from his old enemy, the bobolink, is as willing as ever to begin the attack. I have placed him in a stout cage, where he lazily perches the most of the day as if he were in a sort of stupor. To give him both amusement and exercise I devote odd moments, and my manner is to put my finger in the cage which he

resents with all his might, biting so viciously at times as to puncture the skin.

As soon as spring comes and covers the earth with bloom, I shall carry back the grayfinch to his haunts and there restore him to that liberty his rascality has earned.

I once had the pleasure of witnessing from my study window an interesting and practically harmless fight between a chip-py and a yellowbird. I had been in the custom of scattering canary seed from this window to help a pair of yellowbirds whose nest in an apple tree was almost within my reach. These yellowbirds paid, I am bound to confess, but little heed to my generosity, preferring seeds gathered by their own industry, an industry that has little cessation.

Occasionally they would drop from the apple tree, pick a few seeds, and then disappear with that jerky flight of theirs, which has always seemed to me to be

more of the nature of a jump. It was on one of these occasions that they were honoring me by picking up a few of the scattered seeds, that a chippy sparrow, and his shabbily dressed wife, came along ; and eying the lavish display of food, whispered to his wife that they had better alight and make a meal. No sooner had they done so than I noticed that they were congratulating each other on their good luck in finding such a sumptuous banquet spread for their convenience.

This mode of congratulating I have often witnessed. It consists in a kind of dance-hop, accompanied with an agreeable chirrup. To this mystic rite the male yellowbird, resplendent in perfect coloring, objected, and I could see that his mate was urging him to combat. I had been reading, a few hours before, a tale of a richly clad knight and a homely dressed serf, and in the tale the serf,

scared of the knight's glitter, had run away without striking a blow. "Here," thought I, "is the knight and the serf. Will my plain coated chippy, who is ordinarily an easy going fellow, dare withstand the pugnacious yellowbird?"

But he did, and even more, he met him half-way and put himself in the attitude of defence by squatting low, spreading his wings and giving his battle cry. The yellowbird, on seeing this unlooked for valor, advanced more cautiously and played for position. While he was doing so the female chippy, impatient of all these tactics, attacked the yellowbird from the rear, while her husband now boldly advanced in front and, after a few seconds of vigorous pecking and angry talk, the crestfallen knight and his lady found refuge and peace among the lettuce leaves. The pair having by right of conquest gained possession of the seed patch, under

my window, very human like made up their minds that they would hold it, and, though I am no imperialist, I could not but admire the courage that could take such a resolution. For I here remind the reader, that a few yards from the chippy kingdom lay a land, colonized and inhabited by English sparrows, whose looting forays extended over the whole neighborhood. The chippies were not long in finding out that these marauders would contest their right of sovereignty and do so in thoroughly warlike manner. One morning as the chippies were feeding on a few crumbs, one of these wandering soldiers came to the preserve, scanned it eagerly, flew away and soon returned with the rest of the army, which, on alighting, commenced a war that could have but one issue, the death or captivity of the chippies. There was but one way to save the hardy little fellows, and that

was by placing them under Leon's protection. Leon hated cordially the English sparrows and in his own words for this reason that "he cannot behave himself while the other birds are around." Of the truth of this assertion I oftentimes have been a witness. When a bird "after fooling around a trap for an hour," was about to enter, to the great joy of my anxious boy, a sparrow would drive him off with a noisy twitter, a very song of defiance hurled into Leon's teeth. I remember one instance of this which was very laughable. An English linnet, a cage bird of many years, through the carelessness of the boy, escaped one winter day.

Knowing that it could find no food, as the ground was covered with snow, I put the trap in the garden, baited it with seed and left it under Leon's supervision, who was not a little mortified at his blunder. The linnet joined a band of sparrows, the

only birds to be met with at this season of the year. I was glad at this, as I thought that their curiosity would lead the linnet to the trap and possibly to its capture. I was not mistaken. First one sparrow came and examined, then another, until finally, the whole flock, and with them their guest, were busy picking up the stray seed and fluttering around the cage. The sparrow's ideas of hostship falls short of giving food to his guests, and the linnet noticing this and, moreover, being hungry, thought he would help himself from the dish within the cage, but every movement he made to accomplish this feat was foiled by the sparrows. They jostled him, pecked him, and in every way possible prevented him from entering captivity. To take one of them in a trap was never in my mind. They are too cunning. Civilization has made them artful. I was watching my boy's face whereon the mind was

playing, and it took no deep study to read the message. Suddenly he picked up a piece of cinder, knit his brow, half closed his eyes, and with all the power and deftness of his right hand sent it among his enemies. The sparrows rose and flew away, twittering in their flight their contempt, but, strange to say, the linnet, possibly tired of bad company, remained, and a few minutes after entered the trap. "I have had to shiver here for an hour all on account of those sparrows, I hate them, now. I'll kill every one of them," was the boy's blood-thirsty speech as he bore back to the house the escaped linnet. Now the chippies were safe under the protection of such a good hater of their enemies as Leon, and they seemed to know this for they at once began to build in the vines of the piazza. Their nest was so located that I could, from my study window, watch its building, and I can now

recall what pleasure a pair of chippies brought to me those long, summer days when ill health confined me to my rooms. The male and female were constantly busy gathering grass and horse hair.

The grass was found on the lawn where I had a few handfuls brought long and soft; the horse hair from the barnyard, our pet pony supplying that commodity.

I was, during the building process, amused by an unseemly chatter between the husband and wife. After one of these chattering spells the husband would fly off, while his mate kept on building, apparently more content with his absence than his presence.

My opinion of their quarrel was this, that the male bird threw out some suggestions on nest-building which he wished to put in effect, whereon his mate took offence, and, woman-like, used her tongue, her organ of defence, to down the husband

The quarrel, if I am correct in calling it so, did not last long, not more than a few minutes, when the male returned with a horse hair which he deposited humbly at his mistress' feet, then they kissed and made up, giving, as I often thought, a very sensible lesson to many a foolish human family within my knowledge. As soon as the nest was completed and accepted as a fit abode for Mrs. Chippy's coming family, there came a silence that astonished me. The male bird became more grave, and the female bird seldom appeared. I was anxious to find out the cause of all this quiet, in such demonstrative birds, so, risking the doctor's prophecy, I visited the nest and found Mrs. Chippy sitting comfortably on three pretty blue eggs with little black dots on their larger ends. She paid little heed to my presence, it was only when I reached out my hand to the nest, that she betrayed emotion and took

to flight. She returned in a few minutes and assumed her patient position. My next visit was when the birdies had been hatched about a week. Their mother this time showed more anxiety. The birdies, little funny balls, at my "tweet tweet" opened their depth of yellow mouths asking for food, in which Leon, unaccustomed to the finer shades of speech, remarked that they were all mouth and skin.

One thing I noted was her disinclination to feed during the nursing period. As far as my observations could detect, her food consisted in worms and grubs of various kinds. I had some meat cut, torn in shreds, and placed near the nest to tempt Mrs. Chippy's appetite, and if I succeeded thereby giving her, as I thought, a much needed rest, and my plan was successful. Both birds became my guests. After their brood was reared and had taken

their departure, I took in the trap their parents and transferred them to my small aviary which stands on a table near my desk in order to note their lives in captivity. They became at once contented and exceedingly social, spending their time in the bottom of the cage rather than on the perches. They bathe three or four times a day, in the most gentle way, sitting on the edge of the dish, and throwing the water over their bodies. I have been unable to detect in the male bird any further capability for song other than the chipping that has given him a name.

An enthusiastic bird lover who has had many years' experience with our common birds as caged companions, tells me that the chippy, under a master, develops a song much as the English sparrow does; if so I live in hopes that some fine morning Mr. Chippy will favor me with a tune.

A few years ago when on a visit to Montreal I purchased a little paper-covered book at the cost of five cents. It was a Scotch edition of John Burrough's *Winter Sunshine*, and to this book I owe my first interest in the crow. Burroughs is a keen and kindly observer of Nature. His writings in this line have been a source of great enjoyment to me. It is to be regretted that he does not keep within his limitations where he is a charming instructor, but must meddle with literary criticism.

Thank heaven, no reader these days can be made to take his reading by prescription, so I can confine myself as I do to Mr. Burrough's delights, and they are enough to satisfy any ordinary demand. In Canada, as in Europe, there are first and second class railway coaches.

My idea in purchasing the book was to have some reading matter in case I could

not make an acquaintance with some of my travelling companions. I always ride in the second class coach, not so much for the difference in fare, as for the ease with which a chat may be had with the class of society that travels in these coaches.

Society in a first class coach is distant, dull, and listless, so much given to introspection, that there is neither time nor a desire for conversation. Now in a second class coach this is all changed, the workmen's brains are active and their tongues communicative. They put forth their ideas with dash and spirit, fight for them vigorously, and prop them with illustrations drawn from their lives that are both clever and striking.

In a first class coach you are supposed to give information if you carry on a conversation, in a second class you will receive knowledge, and if you are a believer

in the masses, as the present writer, you will receive sustenance for your belief. So taking my little book, I entered a second class coach on my way home finding therein an American iron-moulder who gave me the half of his seat with an eagerness that showed his sense of fellowship. I was sorry when he left me, the only occupant of the car, an hour later, for his talk was shrewd and sensible. It was then I threw myself into an easy attitude and dipped into *Winter Sunshine*. Here are a few passages which I read over and over again, and to them must be attributed the passionate desire that awoke within my breast of owning a crow: "The crow may not have the sweet voice which the fox in his flattery attributed to him, but he has a good, strong, native speech, nevertheless. How much character there is in it! How much thrift and independence! Of course his plumage is firm, his color decided, his wit quick,

“He understands you at once and tells you so; so does the hawk by his scornful, defiant whir-r-r-r-r. Hardy, happy outlaws, the crows, how I love them! Alert, social republicans, always able to look out for themselves, not afraid of the cold and the snow, fishing when flesh is scarce, and stealing when other resources fail, the crow is a character I would not willingly miss from the landscape. I love to see his track in the snow or the mud, and his graceful pedestrianism about the brown fields.

“He is no interloper, but has the air and manner of being thoroughly at home, and in rightful possession of the land. He is no sentimentalist like some of the plaining, disconsolate song-birds, but apparently is always in good health and good spirits. No matter who is sick, or dejected, or unsatisfied, or what the weather is, or what the price of corn, the

crow is well and finds life sweet. He is the dusky embodiment of worldly wisdom and prudence." A few days after my return home, while driving in the country, I came to a log cabin, and on the rickety slab fence in front of the door, saw a crow, his master, a dirty-faced, half-clad-boy, lying in the grass, and holding a string attached to the crow's leg. The boy, as he watched the crow's efforts to escape, laughed as only a boy can.

His laughter made merry my approach. "What will you take for your crow?" I asked, as I stopped the pony.

"How much do you think he is worth?" retorted the youngster, tightening the string on his victim.

"Set your own price," I replied, as I jumped from the buggy and went to meet him. As I did so he arose, seized his crow, yelled viciously and ran into the house. His yelling brought his father

from the fields, and I became heartily sorry for my crow enthusiasm. A little explanation, however, made things right, and the boy, who thought me a policeman, was calmed and brought out to dicker with me. I told the father that unless the boy, of his own accord, desired to part with his pet, I could not countenance a bargain. I should not buy my pleasures with children's tears.

The boy with a little more confidence told me that he wanted to sell his crow, if he could get a pair of pigeons in its place, and the mother added that he was in more need of clothes, a motherly and truthful remark. As I wanted the crow I satisfied both mother and son, and drove home as pleased as a child carrying a toy. Betimes how little it takes to please us! My household had been taught, by years of experience, that their objections to my pets must not go beyond

a protest, and I narrate here for the comfort of those who intend to keep pets that the power of protest was exercised on every possible occasion. After the protest, of which I heard but a few words, I committed my crow to my housekeeper's keeping, much against that functionary's will, called him "Major," and gave him the range of the kitchen. To keep him within control and not to exhaust the housekeeper's patience by breaking dishes and jumping on tables, I clipped his wing. The lad had told me that his diet had been bread and potatoes, but I noticed that he had a strong desire for meat, and being allowed to satisfy this desire he evinced a decided distaste to his former food. His taming was a very simple process, in truth, I take no credit in it, for Major became tame of his own accord. By the time his wing grew he had become a part of my household and I had no fear of his flying away.

His first companionship was with a few imported tumbler pigeons among whom he strutted with dignity and authority. Later this companionship grew broader and embraced a fox-terrier, two great Danes, two St. Bernards and a neighbor's maltese cat. Cats find no place in my household, for they are incapable of personal attachment. I know there are those to whom this statement will be rank heresy, but a little thought given to the subject will convince the most sceptical that a cat's first love is for the house, and that a family may move out and a new family move in without the cat's regret, provided she is well fed. Compare her to the dog who would rather follow his master on a crust than live in luxury without him. I had reared a spaniel and after a few years gave him to a family that loved him and treated him accordingly. He had not seen me in two years, but

when we met his joy knew no bounds, and during my stay he was always at my heels. When I went away his master wrote that he was inconsolable.

Major developed for me something like this spaniel's attachment. He would follow me all over town until he was as well known a figure on the street as I was. He loved noise and made his way to it as quick as his wings bore him. Following this oddity he was to be found perched on a dwarf maple during the children's play-time shouting, "Hillo quick," the only words I was able to teach him. And the children gave him no annoyance for he was, in a sense, their pet as well as mine. They divided their lunches, giving him the tidbits, well pleased when he condescended to dine with them. Day after day he extended his rambles until he might be met with in every nook and corner of the village and without the slightest fear for

his personal safety. His one weakness was society, he could not bear to be alone.

From having had a parrot who was very fond of being teased and played with, and having witnessed play as a part of the daily life of wild birds I began my experiments with Major by tickling him with a feather, then throwing him on his back and catching hold of his feet, scratching his head and similar tricks to which he responded with a purring sound, giving the most direct evidence of his pleasure. I could only compare him to a child, the more you teased the more pleased was Major. He was very fond of chicken bones, imitating in this my parrot whose fondness for this article of diet has, on several occasions, endangered his life. He is also a lover of sweets, especially our northern-made cookies.

In case he has had more food than needful, he very cautiously hides it, and

his methods are most amusing. The keen eye that he keeps on his friends, the swaggering gait, and the confidence he has in his ability to outwit us is ever fruitful of health-giving laughter. I have seen him on several instances watch the pert fox-terrier hide a bone (with the utmost solemnity). A close watch discovered his object when later Major flew to the hiding place and with loud cawing set to work to unearth the bone. My boy had only one word to express the reason for things being done different to his mind. He called it "deviltry," and this word he applied to Major's proceeding, and I cannot but admit that the word covered his actions, for once the bone was above ground Major flew away and was ever after indifferent to its fate. A neighbor satisfied with my success in crow-taming, and desiring to follow in my footsteps, procured a young bird, and having

spent much time on his education, possessed a bird much superior to Major. He calls him Charlie, and Charlie, although living at the other end of the town, passes most of his time in my yard philosophizing with the Major who permits his friend the freedom of the entire property save the kitchen. Here he will not allow him to enter. I know why but I am not going to pull my friend's character to pieces.

As I write Major and Charlie are perched on the roof of the barn, not uttering a word, their heads well thrown back, the sun glistening on their backs. What an uncanny appearance they present! So I fall to meditate on what they are thinking about, and I am sure it will be as profitable as the meditations of philosophers. It can be no more barren of results than their speculations. Leon declares that they have only one thought, how to live the day, and if this be so, they touch closer than I knew the vast majority of men.

One of the most vivid bits of my early recollections, is a selection from Sterne, *The Tale of the Caged Starling*. To this day the poor bird's sad refrain comes to my mind at the most unlooked for times. What I suppose made the impression so indelible on my young fancy was the teacher's voice as he read, "I cannot get out, I cannot get out," said the starling. The teacher's face is before me, a long, bony face, curved, crooked and indented to oddity, but lit up with eyes, large, mellow, gray eyes, that won for it reverence. Many stories were told of his loves and adventures, his cares, and now his sorrows, for ill-health and cramping years had compelled him to eke out a sustenance in teaching children, and all these stories but made him more conspicuously the hero of my childhood. When the tale was ended, he gathered us close to him, and, with a pencil, deftly drew the bird and its cage, de-

scribed the starling, and told a dozen little tales of its doing, planting in my heart that love for Nature which has made me happy in all my wanderings.

The purse might be light, the road hard, and the future dark enough, but what matters all these things, if there were meadows, along the way, babbling brooks, breaking flowers, birds in song. I could make a couch under the broad-leaved trees, in the thick, cool grass, Heaven's best music, the birds above me, and dream dreams that no kings could enact. He only, I reckon, a teacher who provides us with a shield against the future's tyranny. What a teacher; he was my first master to give me a love that grows stronger with the years, a love that will survive and give pleasure when other loves more fondly planted, more tenderly nurtured, are dead, leaving but a dim remembrance, a fire-fly light amid the giant shadows of the past.

The life of love is growth ; even while his soft voice, narrating the wonderful tricks of the starling, fell on our ears, I must have been dreaming of some day owning such a marvellous bird, for from those early days came the longing for a starling. I so familiarized myself with the bird's figure and plumage that I would have no hesitancy in picking him out in any bird shop I might enter. But it was not in a bird shop that I first met him, but in a little sequestered Irish village, lying on the banks of a sleepy old river, in whose clear pools, as the peasantry tell, when the moon and the stars are out, nymphs, the prettiest in Erin, disport themselves, singing songs that lure the human heart to death. On an early morning, I sauntered from this town along its leading way until I reached a glebe, the property of an English clergyman, and could go no further, held by the beauty of

the place. I entered the gate and walked up the broad avenue, shaded by the fragrant horse-chestnut. The lawns, which extended from the avenue, were dotted with small trees, juniper and holly and flowering shrubs, mostly the rhododendron, then in gorgeous bloom. From a little patch of furze, ablaze in the love of the sun, came the thrush's "fine, careless rapture." In front of me in the holly was the blackbird, his fine golden tune filling the woodland with his magical spell.

On the avenue at their ease, picking in the gravel or hopping by the edge of the lawn, were chattering sparrows and robins half awake, trilling now and then a liquid note.

The goldfinch was calling from the sycamores, a bulfinch shot through the greenery of the hawthorne hedge giving me a bit of his color and a few sleepy notes. In the meadows the larks were

rising and descending, scattering through the clover-scented air the stolen music of the gods.

Amid these scenes, fit abode for a dreamer, came my first starling, shooting in and out through a bit of straggling hawthorne hedge, the steel blue and the dark green and purple of his coat flashing vividly in the sunlight, but seeming to change to other colors as the bird went further from my view. I could understand the truth of diverse description of this bird's plumage, for while his true color is that revealed to me in the hawthorne hedge, it seems to vary with the degree of sunlight and shade. But he is a handsome bird, no matter in what light he is seen, while in cleverness he is easily the master of all his bird companions. He is as light and true on his feet as a Parisian dancing master, and his grace under the most arduous circumstances, is

always that of the best society. I have never seen a starling with that slatternly droop common to so many birds in the woods, when they think that they are unobserved. He is always on dress parade. I sat down on a rustic seat, a seat, I learned afterwards, that was the favorite resting place of the owner, an observant and highly-gifted man, whose love for birds had filled his grove with song when other groves were silent. Love conquers all. The starling was joined by his mate, after I lost sight of him, and when he returned with her and entered a cherry-bush I was, as the children say, "all eyes." My patience and vigilance was repaid, for I witnessed a pretty bit of bird courtship, and though the maiden did not, in my presence, become engaged, there was something about her that told me she was perfectly willing to be so, and that her impatient air and angry manner was put

on to increase her value in the eyes of the amorous male. Love, what a plague you are, blinding our eyes to mockeries and veriest delusions! Once, when the male tired of his entreaties, sulked and flew away, the female immediately showed a power which intrinsically belongs to all her class by whistling him back to more utter subserviency. I left them to their quarrels, well knowing the result, and sought the little town, now awake from its sleep, amused on my way by the antics of a chattering magpie. My next meeting with the starling was at an old English inn, one of those that Hazlitt loved to frequent, where a bottle of wine and a chicken might be easily had after one of his long, country rambles; I know of no hostlery to compare with these inns.

One can apply to them what Maurice De Guerin calls that "*delicieuse express-*

ion Anglaise qui resume tout le chez soi— at home.” The starling I saw at this inn brought me no joy, but a certain jerk of sharp pain, leaving in my memory an impression that must ever remain there. Almost in front of the inn grew a large sycamore tree. The morning after my arrival it was alive with starlings on their annual passage, and no prettier sight can be seen than a flock of those birds whose motions are constant and whose plumage assumes, under the sun’s rays, such varying colors. The jolly master of the inn had just called me to see the pleasant sight, when bing, bang, bang, went the guns, and by the time I hurried to the street, more than forty starlings lay dead and wounded around the trunk of a tree, their beautiful plumage bespattered with blood and dirt. The actors in this miserable affair were boisterous, telling of their exploits, and a crowd, drawn by the gun’s

report, were listening, with glee in their eyes, to the wanton, cowardly destruction of the birds. Such heartlessness I have never seen equalled. I left the town in disgust, though I had planned to spend a few weeks amidst its beauties which were inviting me on every side, but the murder of the birds stole away all the charm that would have been mine in this rustic retreat.

A starling came into my possession a few years ago, without the slightest romance attached to it. A New York bird dealer had it in his possession for two years and, being unable to sell it at any price, gave it to me with a few birds I had purchased. "Do you see that starling," said the bird man,— "he just looks as if death would be a relief; if you want to bother with him I'll throw him in with the rest."

The bird was in a bad plight, a sorry

object to behold. He had been confined to a small cage, had been deprived both of his exercise and bath, and the consequence was that most of his feathers, and especially those of his head, were rubbed off, his wings trailed hiding the sore and dirty feet; the eyes were heavy and dull, but Hope, always hid in the human mind as it was in Pandora's box, came to my succor when I had the words of refusal on my lips, giving me enough of cheer to suppress them and permit the starling to be mine. I started home that night with the birds, arriving there the next afternoon and transferred them to cages.

The starling was so weak that his feet doubled under him, but Hope still stood by me. Leon was sent to the cabbage path to find some slugs, while another of my household procured a large, wooden cage, sprinkled it thickly with sand and placed in it a large bathing pan. All

being ready, I put the starling, to whom I gave the name of Hope, in the bottom of this cage and in a little dish in front of his bill, the appetizing slugs. He glanced at them cautiously, touched them gently with the front of his beak and then, mindful of old memories, greedily devoured them. A few days later he took a little hurried dip in his bath-pan. To the slugs and seed I added fruit and a little red pepper now and then. In three weeks he was able to perch and in less than eight days from that time his recovery was complete. I had handled him so much in the days of his sickness that all the wildness had gone out and a thorough attachment taken its place, which was proven on many occasions. He became a great favorite for his droll ways and the restless activity with which he busied himself from morn till night. His love of fine clothes was very marked, for not a single particle of dirt was

allowed to rest on his well-polished coat. No old Roman loved his bath more than Hope, and I have again and again stopped my writing to watch the felicity with he bathed. He would totally abandon himself to its delight, plunging into the basin, tossing the water with his head, flapping it with his wings, all the while the eyes sparkling with joy.

I have tried, following the tale of Norman Macleod's Starling, whose talking propensities brought so much trouble to his loving master, to educate Hope to the making of short phrases, but so far my success has been less than moderate. He says, "Ho, ho, well, well," but further in speech-making he refuses to go. If men were only so modest what peace on earth! But left to himself he has composed the most wonderful medley of sound. He has taken the notes of all the birds in my house and all those he has heard in the bird

store and mixed them up in the most humorous and laughable way. To these lately he has added the screeching of the parrot, and the bray of a neighbor's donkey. This complicated masterpiece he is entirely too willing to pour forth, and especially so if any strangers are around him. He hangs now in the parlor and, as I write, he is piping this masterpiece and half a dozen merry children sitting in front of him. His fame has gone abroad, his eccentricities have made his reputation, and there are those who swear that the song is his own, "a great song, a veritable masterpiece."

I know better, but nought shall I say,
advised by Shakespeare,

"A friend should bear his friend's infirmities."

Somehow or other, in early childhood, I came to have an idea that the owl was not just earthly, or, to better express my

mind, that it had doings with the world which lies beyond Nature. And this foolish idea still clings to my head, not any longer, it is true, as a belief, for a moment's reflection shows its absurdity, but as the first impression that passes before me at the mention of the word owl. This is but a proof, how difficult it is to eradicate our earliest sensations, and the indentions they make when later life comes with its corrective hand. Biography assures me that a complete success here cannot be obtained, and hence I have come to believe that the phrase, "The child is father of the man," can be taken in a stricter sense than that thought of by the poet.

This idea of the owl must have arisen from the strange stories I heard of him in those early days.

By the chimney corner in the winter nights, when the wind sang his mournful

music through the pinery and made strange sounds in every corner of the house creating a mystic atmosphere around us, we, children, heard tales of this bird that made us afraid to climb the stairs that led to our cots, and when there, turned to very torment all our waking hours. These tales told how he could speak, dance, and turn himself into every possible shape.

How vividly I remember waking up one beautiful, moonlight night, when the stars were looking through the window, filling my soul with beauty and wonder, how the memory of an owl that had turned himself into a maiden, and carried away a boy, changed all these pleasant sensations to pain, and kept me hid under the bed clothes in abject fright, until that most loveable of all the gods, Morpheus, struck my forehead with his golden wand, and bade me dream and artifice more pleas-

ant figures than changing owls. Even in boyhood this fear continued, and amidst all the dreams I dreamt in those happy days, reading Buffon and extracts from Audubon, there never came one for a desire to own an owl. Bird lovers' tastes develop from the bird to the race, and I can no longer claim any detachment on the score of the owl. He, too, has a place in my heart. Here is how my passion started.

I had been on a hunting expedition, in the heart of the Adirondacks, and on such occasions, early rising is indispensable to secure game. One morning I was at my post a few minutes after five waiting for a shot. This post was by the side of a huge cedar that grew by the edge of a little forest brook. From afar off, I could hear the glorious music of the dogs, making me impatient for the approach of the deer, but soon the music died away, the morn-

ing's air became chill and more piercing, and with these things, my attention dull and listless, until finally I wrapped my catskin coat close around me, put my Remington safely against the tree, threw myself on the ground, and was soon fast asleep, unmindful of dogs and deer and all my waking glories. From this delightful sleep, (for there is no sleep comparable to that taken in the open), I was aroused by a series of hideous cries that I can bring no language to picture. My first feeling was one of fright, but remembering that the Remington was at my hand and that my reputation as a sportsman was at stake, this feeling passed for one of anxious curiosity to lodge a bullet in the heart of the monster which, I was coming to believe, was no other than a dreaded catamount of whose prowess and cunning, I had heard a dozen stories around the camp-fire. Again I heard the hideous cries and this time much louder

than before, and blending with them came the running music of a couple of dogs, and a few minutes later a breaking of the brush-wood and a crackling of leaves. I had barely time to grasp the gun when a huge deer was within a few yards, coming at full speed. A well-aimed bullet brought him to the ground, and as he fell in death's throes, a large bird flew from above my head into the thickness of the forest. It was an owl of the species known to woodmen as the hawk-owl, and this was the monster whose unearthly cries had aroused me from sleep, and put me in an attitude to slay the lordly brute that lay at my feet. For this service I owed him at least some sort of recognition, which I gave to him in the form of trying to disengage my mind from the mass of prejudice heaped against his race in my childhood, and from this effort came the ambition to possess an owl and study his ways at my leisure. This

ambition was fostered by my friend and neighbor, who had a long experience with these birds. One is worth relating.

He had a very large eagle that had been captured in the wilds of Canada when very young, and was in some degree tame, at the time to which I refer. He was kept in a wired apartment chained by the leg, and had for his companion a large owl. They were chained in such a way that they could just touch bills. I had often been their visitor, and had for hours listened to their master's tales, of their love for each other and good comradeship.

One winter's night the owl slipped his chain, and in the morning, when my friend visited his pets, he found the owl plucked quite clean and partly eaten. He has another owl, but it is not in the same apartment as the eagle. Enthusiasm is always tamed by experience. It was to this friend whose love for everything in Nature is so

well known to the country people, that they send him all kinds of birds and animals that fall in their way, that I owe my first owl whose mounted figure now sits on my writing desk, with that same calm and grave attitude which he bore in life, as if the problems of the world pressed heavy upon him. - It but shows the acuteness of the Greek mind when it dedicated this bird to Minerva.

My friend's gift was, at his own suggestion, placed in a screen wire cage and in a part of the cellar that was both comfortable and easy of access. He was of the same species as I had heard in the Adirondacks.

At first he was warlike and vicious ready to pounce upon my hand, as I carefully pushed it toward him. He would not eat in my presence, his only game to watch every movement of my body, holding himself on defense, and uttering ho, ho, in a jerky way which I took to be his battle cry.

When the fox terrier, who is always at my back, came to the cage, Cato threw himself on his back and worked his legs like two drum sticks. As his cage was large and the handling of him difficult, I built a stand much the same as that used for parrots, and removed him to it, giving orders that I was to be his only visitor, which I might here remark was unnecessary, as my household took no interest in his affairs. I visited him regularly for over three months, without making the slightest impression upon him, and I was beginning to get tired of his refusals to my companionship when Leon suggested a new means to conquer his resistance. The boy had caught hold of a dozen mice and his suggestion was that I should present one of them to Cato with my compliments, promising him more of the same dainties for his friendship. I took the mouse, tied a string to its hind leg, and held it in front of the

philosopher who watched with his one eye the frantic efforts of the mouse to get away. As I let out the string, and the mouse ran further from his stand, his interest so increased that he flew from his perch with all grace and dignity, and when he returned the mouse was in his keeping. After he had dispatched the mouse I approached close enough to scratch his head, after which I gave him from my hand another mouse, and from that day until his untimely death, Cato gave me no more trouble. I cannot say that his affection was very demonstrative, but it was solid. And that was more befitting his sober look.

“Our outward act is prompted from within.”

After having him in my possession for almost a year I gave him a chance to seek his liberty, did he desire to do so, by leaving the cellar door open. Toward dusk he came to the yard, flew to the

barn, entered it and was soon lost to my seeing. I then made up my mind that Cato had for good taken his departure, but, on the advice of Leon, leaving the cellar door open I was astonished next morning to find Cato perched in his old place looking nothing the worse from his night's outing.

After this I gave him full liberty, and to this liberty must I attribute his early death and the loss of incentive for further owl studies.

It happened in this way. In the cellar, as in most cellars of our Northland, there are large, uncovered cisterns to hold soft water. One morning Cato, whether for the purpose of drinking or other purpose unknown to me, I cannot say, sought this cistern. When Leon found him he was in the centre of it, as wise looking as ever. With the aid of a hooked pole he was brought to land, rolled in a flannel

cloth and by the boy's hands lovingly deposited by the fire. He made not the slightest resistance. It has often been my study the taming effects the coming of death has on the wildest animals. Some years ago I saw a remarkable instance of this in the death of a catamount. For five minutes before his death he paid no attention to us, allowing us to pass over his body freely. It seemed to me, however, that during this time his eyes were telling the awful pain of the final conquering. Just as he rolled over in death I caught in his eye the same look as I once saw in the eyes of a dying bandit, the protest of unbridled liberty against the despotism of civilization.

Cato lay in his improvised little cot for a whole day. Toward night-fall I noticed a glaze stealing over his eyes and I knew that he could not last but a few minutes, so I uncovered him and laid him on the

bare floor, when he rolled on his back, kicked once or twice with his legs and then forever was calm.

The same member of my family who had formerly accused Leon of capturing the sparrow, Kit, now came forward and made a long harangue much in the manner of Antony over the dead Cæsar, using Cato as an illustration to act upon our sympathies. The pith and point of her charge was that Leon, having heard that an owl could swim as good as an otter, threw Cato into the cistern to test the truth of the tale, and finding that the bird did not do what his race was supposed to do naturally, called me to witness a so-called accident, but what was in reality a dastardly attempt to take the owl's life, and then the orator, pointing to the dead body of Cato, and flashing her large, lustrous black eyes full on the boy's face, said in pathetic tone, "and the villain has succeeded."

Leon was not awed in the slightest by the maiden's onslaught and, when his turn came to speak, defended himself in such a gallant manner that I could not but believe his speech, for I hold with Shakespeare that "An honest man is able to speak for himself, when a knave is not."

One of my boyish longings was to be the possessor of a parrot. When about six years old I read a little book on these birds, and it so fired my ambition that, when a year later a showman came to town with a talking gray parrot, I followed him from street to street in a perfect rhapsody of delight. His parrot, as I remember, was an accomplished talker, and this accomplishment settled in my mind any doubts I had as to animals being able to talk.

From that time, and for many years after, I was constantly on the lookout for a chat with Danny, the black cat, and Tobey,

the greyhound, and if my ambition to discourse with these worthies was never satisfied, I was far from blaming them, believing that fear of losing their home kept them from exercising their wonderful gift, for, young as I was, I well knew from the nightly fireside tales what prejudice there was against talking animals. When the showman left the town, I strongly desired to accompany him and be Polly's most loving and admiring companion, but my wishes in the matter were scouted and trampled upon. I was locked in a room while Polly and the showman took the main road for parts unknown, left lonely and sad to cry, till exhausted I fell asleep and found in dreams what was denied to my waking hours. Somewhere, I cannot just now tell where, the great English Cardinal Manning, whose strange, thin, pallid face and piercing eyes won my ardent admiration in his bare London

house years ago, has written that the world is not worthy of a child's tear. The man was worthy of the saying, and ever since I read it, have I added his name to those to whose worth I have erected a tablet in the pantheon of my memory. The maker of such a phrase is a leader ahead of his times, ahead of an age that permits childhood to carry a thousand brutalities on its weak, young shoulders, turning what nature intended for a fair form into a shrunken, aching, shapeless thing, blinding the vision of the eyes, paralyzing the liveness of the limbs and filling the soul with canker. When I walk through the ghettos of our great cities, and behold such misshapen things speaking so keenly to my soul of the rapacious blind greed of those who command, and the living tortures of those who must obey or die, I wonder if our age ever pauses to think what kind of human beings she proposes

to give as a legacy to the future, for the child is father of the man, and the man will be father of the child, and so on, until in time the brute men, goaded by their matadors, will become as fierce as Spanish bulls, and the wrongs of years will be adjusted in blood. In a bird store in the capital of Old Mexico, kept by a Frenchman who came to give Mexico a king, and seeing the king shot and his fellows captured, became a good republican and swore fealty to the land of his adoption, I saw the largest collection of parrots that fortune could bring to a bird lover, and many of them, mostly the native bird, so cheap as to tantalize my heart into barter, but my reason held out, showing the absurdity of any such proceeding.

I was a wanderer and did not know the length or extent of my wanderings. I had no settled place of abode, here to-day and away to-morrow sort of existence.

As the Frenchman loved to talk English, though I understood him much better in either French or Spanish, and as I have always been willing to have a man mount his hobby in my presence, I soon became a great favorite with Monsieur Bourgeois, an acquaintance which gave me a respectable and delightful lounging place, and the dapper little Norman a chance to practise his loquacity in laughable English. I was very willing to correct him, but I found him perverse to such a course, much preferring his own mixing, to the queen's authorized brew. Seeing this I made no further remonstrance, but valiantly engaged him whenever we met, asking no explanation on his part. What I did not understand I allowed to pass, believing its loss of small account. There are more than poets born. Bird-lovers are of the class to whom I refer, for no amount of teaching can supply the defect, and M.

Bourgeois was born a bird-lover. Each parrot in his collection appealed to him from an intrinsic peculiarity that marked him from his fellows. One of his often repeated sayings that birds, in their dispositions, are as different as men, after long experience, comes to me as a truth.

Here are four canaries out of the same nest; one is gay and joyous, another sulky, a third wild, and the fourth by times combining all their dispositions. I know of no class of animals where the truth of the Frenchman's opinions is more evident than among dogs and the investigator is at his leisure. M. Bourgeois was not a believer in the tales that have common currency in regard to the parrot. He held that the gray parrot had a very retentive memory and could, from constant repetition, master a short lyric, as he proved to my scepticism by having a bird for foreign trade repeat in excellent

French a humorous drinking song; the yellow headed variety came next in his estimation as a talker, while for gaiety, and originality, he preferred him to all other parrots.

A third kind, with a bar of blue on its head, while a passable talker in the romance languages, could not master our English tongue. I heard a species of this parrot a few years later, giving a fine imitation of a drunken, Spanish sailor, but I was then told that he was an uncommon bird that no money could purchase, albeit his owner was far from being a rich man. My good opinion of the man grew wonderfully when I knew that he kept his bird out of love. Many keep birds for show and treat them with a recklessness proportionate to their egotism.

Not so with the bird-lover who would fast and be cold in order that his little pets were warm and well-fed. Their

songs are not for the idle crowd, but for the master's heart. The stories of parrots carrying on a conversation my Frenchman denounced, and a little reflection makes one of his opinion.

Under the tutelage of Monsieur Bourgeois I not only learned much about parrots and their treatment, but begot a revival of my old love for them, the grace of which still remains with me. Wonder not then that as soon as I was settled down, the anchor cast for a few years, that I became the possessor of a brace of parrots, a gray and a yellow head. The gray parrot had been brought from the west coast of Africa in a sailing vessel, and had mastered a few nautical terms. In my possession he became so wild and sulky that no one could approach his cage, and after a few weeks of continual beating his head against the wires, lay down and died.

All my care was now turned to the yellow head. I put him in my study where he was under my own eyes, and where I could note his slightest indisposition.

I was rewarded for all my care, for Senor became in a short time such a pet as to have no need for a cage. My first bound to his intimacy was through a chicken bone of which he is passionately fond, dropping all other eatables for this dainty.

Hold up a chicken bone and Senor immediately lays his plans to procure it. He dances up and down his perch in the most ludicrous fashion, with the most gracious series of bows; if, after this old fashioned waltz, the bone is still kept from him, he gives an imitation of the summer song of a Mexican burro, and by this time the bone is willingly put in his claws.

Then he seems to have perfect enjoyment and will be heedless of his surroundings until the fox-terrier makes his appear-

ance, when his feathers become ruffled and his loud cry of "dirty dog," resounds through the house. This terrier has snatched Polly's bone more than once, and between them has come a bitter hatred that will grow with the years, for neither of them will speak the first word of friendship.

Wherever they meet Polly Senior calls Jack an abusive name, and he, in dog speech, swears most outrageously at Polly's importance and impudence. With the Great Danes and St. Bernards, Polly is on the most friendly terms, calling them by their names in my voice, and with such an exact imitation that they run to her with great speed.

One of the dogs, a Great Dane, called Cæsar, is very fond of Polly, and Polly reciprocates all the affection lavished upon her by perching upon Cæsar's back, sleeping between his huge paws, balancing

herself on his nose, and the hundred odd ways she has of passing an hour with a friend. Polly sings a few snatches of a topical song that Leon taught her during my absence, and, to my great disgust, as it was my intention to put in her mouth but classic poetry, but since she came under my boy's tuition I note a decided aversion to polite literature, and at the same time a wonderful quickness to catch and repeat phrases that were better left unsaid.

While I praised Polly to a clerical friend of mine as a pious and prayerful bird, rejoicing the heart of the good man, Polly laughed loudly, and made use of a phrase that is not permitted in good society. To this I called the boy's attention and was on the point of giving him a scolding, when the haughty bird sent us with a roar of laughter to the society of a distinguished personage, none other than Monsieur Satan, to use the phrase of the

Englishman who gave it as the equivalent of *le diable*. The boy was not slow to take it as a text to vindicate his honor. "Did I teach her that bad word?" he asked. "Answer me that. If you did not hear her yourself I would be blamed for putting it into her head, but she needs nobody to prompt her, for her head is just full of such stuff, and whenever any body is around she says it to be mean." What could I do but laugh at the boy, bird and my pious friend, vowing that henceforth I should place no confidence in the talk of Polly Senor. I heard later that the pious friend was shocked at the bird's villany and would visit me no more, on which occasion I gave thanks that the Lord made my life a little more pleasant. Of all bores none is more wearisome than the Pharisee.





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